

BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE
OCTOBER, 1948
25 Cents



THESE UNITED STATES... XXII
Oklahoma—Painted by Maurice Bower

TWO NOVELETTES:
THE LAST OUTPOST
by NELSON BOND

MURDER IN THE SUDD
by LAURENCE KIRK

Eleven short stories; many
articles and features



THESE UNITED STATES....XXII—OKLAHOMA

The Sooner State

ON April 22, 1889, at the border of what was known as the "Unassigned Lands," or "Old Oklahoma," some twenty thousand men, many accompanied by their families, tensely waited the firing of a gun. By Executive Order of President Benjamin Harrison the shot would signal the opening of the land lying to the west of Indian Territory for settlement. Some were mounted on swift horses; others drove buggies, wagons, sulkies—every known means of conveyance was in use to carry these homesteaders across the border to stake out their claims in the newly created Oklahoma Territory. . . .

Spanish soldiers questing with Coronado for the fabled land of Quivira in 1541 had been the first Europeans to visit the region. They found few Indians in the country which would later be called Oklahoma—from Choctaw words meaning *Red People*.

It was in 1832 that the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek deeded to the five great Indian tribes of the southeastern States certain lands in the West for "as long as the grass grows and the water runs." The territory

which included most of the land in the present State of Oklahoma became the new home of the Nations of the Cherokees, the Creeks, the Choctaws, the Chickasaws and the Seminoles. Each was a small, self-governing republic. All except the Seminole Nation had written constitutions. In this fresh environment new high levels of development were reached by the Five Civilized Tribes.

Coming from the South, some of the Indians had brought slaves with them, and during the Civil War many of them declared themselves for the Confederacy. As a result, at the end of the war, the Federal Government demanded not only the liberation of the slaves, but also the negotiation of new treaties with the Indian Nations.

These treaties, concluded in 1866, ceded much of the western part of the original land-grants back to the United States for settlement by other Indians and Freedmen. Even after the many grants to various Indian tribes during the next seventeen years, there remained unassigned the large north-central section known as the Cherokee Outlet, as well as nearly

2,000,000 acres of desirable land in the center of the Territory.

Yielding to increasing pressure, the Government in 1889 bought complete title to the Unassigned Lands, and with the first "run" they were opened to settlers. Greer County, claimed by Texas, was added to the Oklahoma Territory by a Supreme Court Decision. In 1906 a convention of 112 delegates from Indian Territory and Oklahoma Territory met in Guthrie and drew up the constitution for a State to include both regions; on November 16, 1907, Oklahoma became the forty-sixth State of the Union.

Petroleum is Oklahoma's richest natural resource, and in the production of broom corn, grain sorghums and zinc it ranks first.

Many Oklahomans are descendants of the "Sooners" who were already settled in the lands opened by the "runs." Many others are proud to share Will Rogers' boast that his ancestors did not come over on the *Mayflower* but were already here to meet the boat. In the broadest sense Oklahoma has every right to its familiar name, the "Sooner State."

Readers' Comment

Justice for Thomas Dover

A LONG-TIME BLUE BOOK buyer, I have often assured acquaintances of BLUE BOOK's remarkably high level of accuracy in its "fact" pieces. But your article about Dr. Thomas Dover is a different matter.

The article describes Dover as a great and cruel pirate; but by every law anybody knew at the time, Dover was never a pirate at all. He was not cruel; on the contrary, he was notably kind. He came near being disbarred for defending charity patients; he faced drumhead court-martial for taking up the cause of 'pressed seamen; he was threatened because he was equally the friend of Protestants, Catholics, white and red and black men.

Mr. Gelb's most disturbing misstatement, however, is the declaration that Dover did not become a doctor at all until he retired on the evil gains of piracy. Fact: Dover graduated at Cambridge, practiced in London for 20 years, conducted research in many medical fields, before he was employed as a physician by Bristol merchants who backed Captain Woodes Rogers in a world-girdling privateering cruise that began in 1704. Promoted as Captain of the privateer *Duke*, Dover led the sacking of Guayaquil—as an Englishman fighting Spaniards—he cured 172 soldiers of the plague and was among the first to use lime-juice against sailors' scurvy; with William Dampier rescued Alexander Selkirk from Mas-a-Tierra in the Juan Fernandez Group (and thereby provided source material from which his friend Daniel Defoe wrote *Robinson Crusoe*); developed new methods in surgical technique and frequently tested opium and an infusion of coca-leaves as anaesthetics; completed the writing of his medical *magnum opus*, "The Ancient Physician's Legacy to His Country"; and invented Dover's Powder (still purchasable from any pharmacist)—all this before he even returned to England.

ROBERT HARDY ANDREWS

REGARDING your story "The Pirate Doctor" appearing in your current issue, I would like to append a note: An official publication "The Ship's Medicine Chest" was issued by the Government back in the 1860's as a guide to ship's officers in the medical treatment of seamen. It is still issued, and I imagine that a copy of it is on every U. S. merchant ship today.

The maintenance of crew's health was delegated to me, and while, as with all officers, I had taken hours of first-aid training, I was not fitted to cope with the case of a seaman who came down with a temperature of 104°.

Checking the observed symptoms with the "Ship's Medicine Chest," I concluded that the seaman was suffering from acute bronchitis and administered the recommended specific, Dover's Powders.

For my money, the old doctor's prescription saved that boy's life. Within two hours his temperature was a little above 99°F. Later, checking the case with a public health official, he gave full credit to the old formula, but stated "it's the first time I've heard of its use in thirty years!"

C. V. M. SUTCLIFFE

BLUE BOOK

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Foal in the Forest



Beside him, the little colt twitched nervously, as though some sixth sense of warning made itself felt. "It's come back!" Joey told himself. "The thing that killed Molly!"

by KENNETH GILBERT

THE Cascade forest, steeped in the golden sunshine of late spring, seemed wrapped in profound slumber; yet Joey Pell had the feeling that in reality it was wide awake, watching him with inscrutable eyes in which there was no friendliness. He felt that it was holding its breath as though in dreadful anticipation. In the awesome stillness the liquid cadence of a Western grosbeak crashed out suddenly like the clangor of a great bell. The grosbeaks sang at dusk; slanting shadows of the big trees warned that sundown was near. It would be black night before Joey reached home three miles away, and still he hadn't found the whimsical old mare who had the annoying custom of seeking the deep woods when she realized that she was about to be blessed with a new colt.

It was a near-miracle that the ancient Molly should ever know the joys and terrors of motherhood again. Long spared even the lightest tasks, she had roamed the wild meadows in virtual freedom, a crotchety dowager whose wisdom of broken fences and trails did small good to the morale of the other Pell horses she could persuade to follow her. It had been four years since her last—and apparently final—colt had been born. But the old mare, with a senile serenity that seemed to scorn the barren years, proved that time can be turned back.

When the astonishing thing happened, when it became apparent that once more she would be fruitful, Jim Pell shrugged in resignation.

"Look, son," he told Joey. "I promised you the next colt, but not Molly's. Never have been able to keep her penned up at a time like this. There was always a wild streak in her. She'd kick herself through the side of the barn in order to get to the woods. Been tryin' to make wolf-bait of herself ever since she was a two-year-old. Well, likely she'll succeed this time!"

"But—her colt!" the boy protested. "What'll become of him? He'll be wolf-bait too!" Then the boy added: "He'll be Baldy's colt, too. Baldy is a great horse!" Joey looked hopeful.

Pell sighed. "Yeah, I know, son. But Molly's last colt was sickly, and died in a couple days. Likely this one wouldn't last, either. Anyway, she's come home before. Either she'll come back now with her youngster, or she won't. Neither of 'em." He

looked at Joey and said: "You'll get Baldy's next colt. Forget about this one." He said it with finality. . . .

Two days had passed since Molly had disappeared.

Yet Joey knew that at this moment in the hushed depths of the ancient forest, she was not far away. For one thing, there were her tracks, clear and sharp in the soft mold of the forest floor, and he guessed that they had been made no later than the previous night. Fingering the rope-halter he had brought to lead her home, he saw where her unshod hoofs had trodden deeply into ground still moist from the vanished drifts of winter.

The woods were hushed as though waiting—waiting for something to happen, something that was *bound* to happen. He looked around. Never before had he been this far into the fastness of fir and hemlock giants which seemed to march in route-step toward the snowy jagged peaks beyond. He knew he wasn't far from where old Molly was hiding with her colt, but his sense of triumph was blunted by foreboding. He sort of wished that he had told his folks about it; yet he realized that if he had done so, they would have put their foot down against it. Better that they didn't know what he was doing, until he returned with Molly and her new colt, and then he wouldn't mind their scolding. That colt would be his own, the first horse he had ever owned. Likely it would be a fine horse too, this son of Molly and Baldy, not sickly like the other one. No colt of his would be left in the woods for wolf-bait!

He swung the halter in his right hand and resumed the trail which Molly had made in leisurely fashion. Presently she had stopped to quench her thirst at a shallow pool of surface water. Her tracks were all about. Now a whisper of wind came through the tree-aisles, cool and warning of the night-chill to follow when the sun disappeared. The trees seemed taller, bigger and more spaced; and it was like walking in an empty cathedral with a high-domed ceiling.

The woods were thickening with deep twilight, for the sun was all but gone. If he turned back now and hurried, he would be well on the way homeward before night really came. Yet if he did so, he knew that he would never find Molly or her colt. She had to be found now, or never.

He kept going more and more nervously, and then he saw a salal thicket, tall and dense, raised before him in what seemed to be an impassable barrier. Ordinarily a low-growing shrub, the salal had flourished rankly in this moist, wild setting, so that now it reached above his head. Despite the density of the thicket, Molly had plunged into the place, breaking a trail for Joey to follow.

He knew that now she had been, for some reason, greatly disturbed.

She had smashed her way through the brush, and she had done so with speed, for her widely spaced prints indicated that panic had overtaken her. Joey followed, wondering what manner of thing could have aroused the usually imperturbable old mare. By and by he stopped where the salal thinned out in a small clearing.

He puzzled out the sign, in the fading light. Something had scared her, all right, but here she had paused, and here a greater moment had overtaken her. Among her tracks were tiny imprints like miniatures of her own. Here her colt had been born! He found at last where she had left the spot, but the little tracks were no longer with hers. Holding to the less-dense portions of the thicket, she had broken into a trot which, he discovered presently, led in a wide circle. And that meant something to Joey.

She would not circle like that unless she was really scared. It could only mean that she had discovered the nearness of an enemy, and was seeking to draw the unknown foe away from her newborn colt.

JOEY stared around at the deep woods, thick now with twilight, and ominously still. Uneasiness flooded back, more pronounced than before. The danger which had threatened Molly could still be near. Did it mean danger to him? It was getting dark, and night would overtake him. He had to find her quickly. She might answer a whistle; she had the knack of doing that when he wanted to summon her from the far end of the pasture. He puckered his lips, but they were dry, and no sound came. Maybe, he thought, that was because he was scared. But he kept moistening them, arguing to himself that he wasn't going to be a baby, and then the sound, unlike any bird-note, reached through the woods, shattering the silence.



Old Molly, obeying instinct implanted in her by ancestors who shielded their young from savage foes, had circled about widely.

He listened long, but no answering whicker came. Now the darkness had come down until he couldn't see far under the great trees with their towering spread. He went ahead a little way, and turned to avoid a big clump of salal, and then he stopped as he made out what appeared to be a curiously heaped pile of leaves.

It had been lately made; he was sure of that, for the forest mold was newly upturned. What was under the pile, if anything, he could not make out; and he knew, abruptly, that he had no immediate curiosity, but rather an eerie feeling of horror. He turned, feeling his heart beating faster, and went back in the direction he came. By and by he stopped, and whistled again.

Once more he listened intently, and this time he was sure he heard reply. Not the familiar neigh of old Molly, but a quavering almost reedy cry. It came from the depths of the thicket out of which he had emerged.

Joey felt his pulse quicken. Again he whistled, and this time he was sure of the reply and the direction whence it came. He started off hurriedly in search, stumbling over dead branches

and roots, but making his way surely in the semi-darkness. At last he knew he was close to the maker of the sound, and he stopped, eyes trying to make out a form in the velvet-dark coverts. But he could see nothing but the shadowy clumps of salal, with here and there an old log, or the tangle of limbs which marked a wind-fall. He wanted to whistle again, yet hesitated. The sound he had heard could have been made by one of a number of things which he might not want to draw any nearer. Somewhere he had heard stories that the more dangerous predators of the deep forest at times made sounds which sounded harmless. As he stood there in indecision, he thought that the woods were growing lighter. He looked into the east, and made out a pale luminescence which he knew was the moon. . . .

There was a crackling sound in the brush nearby, and heart thumping, he tensed in preparation for flight.

Yet he was instantly aware that flight was foolish. If that thing near him intended harm, he would not have time even to climb a tree—and there were few of the latter small enough for him to put his arms

around. He heard the noise again—the breaking of a twig underfoot, an odd-sounding thump, and then a curious snuffling. Now he saw movement. He made out form. And suddenly his fears drained away. Less than twenty feet from him was Molly's colt, trying to rise under a screening clump of salal where he had been cached.

Joey went forward, making clucking sounds, and abruptly he heard an infantile whinny of impatience. The next moment he was on the ground beside Molly's baby, feeling the moist, cool muzzle rubbing against his face, while he put his arms around the little stranger's neck. The colt was too young to know danger; all he knew was that he was desperately hungry. Joey felt a choke in his throat when he realized that the colt had been alone and unfed for hours. What had happened to Molly?

The light was poor, but he could still make out the color of the colt, a deep chestnut. There was a white patch on the forehead, a whitish muzzle. Not at all like old Molly, who was a strawberry roan. This was the son of Baldy! And if his heritage included the qualities of Baldy, this would be a great horse. If he lived!

The youngster struggled to rise, but hunger, or natural weakness of his legs, made it impossible. He had been left alone a long while. Joey thought of Molly, and sudden anger flooded him. And then he thought of that curious mound of leaves and twigs, and fear came. He strove to think of what must be done, what could be done.

The woods were dark now, the pall of night softened only by the strengthening light of the moon, a weird, unearthly glow that sifted through the thickly interlaced tree-tops and searched out the coverts which had been deep in shadow. Molly would not come back—Joey was sure of that. It seemed improbable that the colt was strong enough to walk, and was probably growing weaker every moment. Yet Joey knew that the youngster was too heavy for him to carry. He could leave the colt and make his way homeward as best he could in the moonlight, to get help. But that would necessitate leaving the colt alone, and that was unthinkable. Before the night was gone, some prowling killer would discover the youngster where Molly had hidden him. Joey realized unhappily that there was but one thing to do—he'd have to stay, and hope that by daylight his father, with such other help that could be summoned, would find him and Molly's baby. Yet the unknown terrors of what a vigil like that could mean stirred fresh apprehension.

Not far away was that pile of leaves and twigs scratched over a grisly secret which Joey felt he did not dare think about. He had a vague, formless idea of what had happened. But before fate had overtaken Molly—the fate which Joey's father had predicted—she had succeeded in hiding her baby, and then had gone unflinchingly to her death. But the thing which had struck her down—whatever it was—would return to its kill. It would, Joey believed, return tonight. This time it would probably discover the colt, and it would likewise discover Joey. He shivered, feeling the penetrating night-chill creeping through the woods, and drew his thin jacket closer about him.

THE colt had ceased stirring now, as though convinced that there was no immediate prospect of food. Joey sat there in silence, listening, and presently he heard the forest awaken as night settled down. There was a sudden soft pattering over the dead leaves strewn under the salal clumps, and the sound jerked his nerves. Yet the next moment he knew the noise was made by nothing more alarming than some small creature, perhaps a deer-mouse, in search of food. Once there were two quick thumps on the

ground, and he surmised that he had been discovered by a rabbit which was warning all other forest dwellers of his presence.

There was a faint whispering in the trees overhead, and then a rasping metallic sound. But he knew it was a little saw-whet owl seeking mice. From afar came a hollow, fearsome hooting. A horned owl, huge cousin of the tiny saw-whet, likewise was seeking prey.

The moon rose higher, and a quavering, lonesome cry came from a nearby rise. Joey gulped, even though he knew that the caller was no more than a cowardly coyote. But maybe the coyote had already discovered the nature of what lay beneath the raked-up pile of debris, and was summoning others of his clan before investigating further. Worse still, the coyote's cunning probably would reveal to him and his fellows the hiding-place of Molly's colt, and even these timid predators would make short work of the youngster before morning. Whatever happened tonight, whatever he had to endure, Joey realized now that if he had abandoned the colt in order to get help, the little fellow would not be here when daylight came.

Stronger now came the moon-rays through the trees, and at last the pale orb peered into the clearing which was surrounded by the thicket. Joey fought now against the growing intensity of the cold. He was hungry, shivering. But the colt, unused to this bitter world, and even more desperately hungry than the boy, was trembling not only with misery but with, perhaps, the first awakening of fear.

"Poor little fellow!" Joey whispered. He pulled off his jacket and drew it about the colt's shoulders. It seemed a foolish, rather useless thing to do, and yet the act seemed to have a comforting effect, not so much for the slight warmth which the jacket gave the colt, but the sense of protection he must have felt.

The moon flooded the clearing now, and the night-air had a nip that was almost frosty. Joey thought of how a fire would have solved the problem; it would have warmed both himself and the colt, and at the same time it would have kept predators away. But he knew that he had no matches. All that he could do was to wait, and hope.

The coyote sang again, nearer this time, and Joey heard answers from two different directions. The furtive clan was gathering; something in the very air told them that a kill had been made. They would join and search it out, and by their numbers they would gain courage if their claim to the prize was disputed. Joey was none too certain what would happen

if a pack of them discovered him. They would presently conclude that he was young, unarmed and helpless. If there were many of them, their hunger might drive them to attack. Coyotes, he felt, were not so cowardly as they were naturally cautious; they could be bold enough if no risk were involved.

Then, abruptly, came blank silence throughout the woods. The quavering calls of the little yellow wolves were no longer heard; the harmless rustlings of small creatures died away. Joey heard the faintest whisper of hushed wings as a brief shadow flicked across the moon. The horned owl apparently had decided to take his hunting elsewhere. Even the little saw-whet had vanished. It seemed as though the forest became breathless with suspense.

JOEY stared around; the old scarieness returned, for no reason which was apparent. Beside him, the little colt twitched nervously, as though some sixth sense of warning made itself felt. "It's come back!" Joey told himself. "The thing that killed Molly!" Yet there was no sound, no movement which he could see, but he knew that it was there—nearby perhaps, maybe regarding him with malevolent eyes. The colt began what promised to be a thin plaint against cold hunger inside it, but the boy clapped his hand over the soft muzzle, stilling the cry. "No sound!" he thought. "Can't make the slightest noise." Within the thicket where the two of them lay, the shadows had deepened once more, for the moon had swung across the clearing. If they kept moveless here, making no noise, whatever manner of thing prowling the gloom out there might pass them by.

Joey had lost all track of time. It had seemed many hours since the sun had set. Certainly much time had passed, for the moon had passed the zenith, and still the forest was hushed as though in apprehension. Waiting was the most terrifying part of the ordeal, waiting for something to happen, something to appear. Suddenly he twisted sharply as he heard sound behind him.

Yet the noise, a muffled crackling of brush, came from the far side of the clearing. Something black and bulky loomed there, and like a dark shadow moved between the clumps of salal. Presently it stopped, and Joey realized that something must have warned it of his presence. Perhaps the beast—surely a huge black bear—had caught his scent and that of the colt, for the cool air currents were moving across the clearing directly toward the newcomer. There was a long moment of silence, then a loud "whuff!" and in relief Joey

observed the bear disappearing in the brush.

Was this the slayer of Molly? Joey guessed that the bear was big enough and strong enough to have killed the mare, and would not have hesitated about doing it; but something told the boy that the real menace had not yet revealed itself. The bear was not the reason why the forest had suddenly become silent, nor why the boy had felt vague fear—and still felt it. The bear had discovered the presence of a human, and prudently had drifted away; but there was possibility that hunger and curiosity would overcome his fear, and he would return.

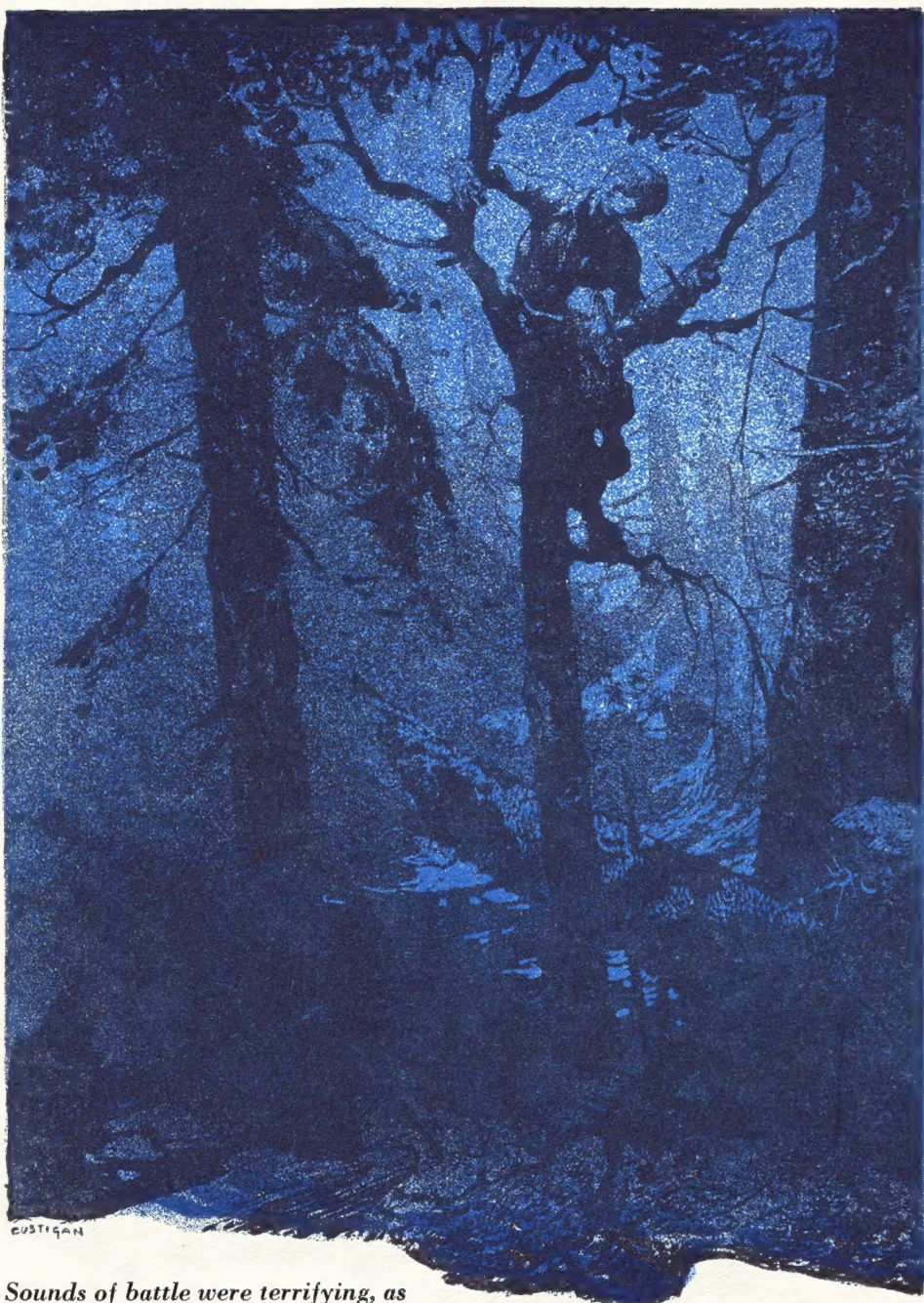
THE boy shivered. Already he was numb with the chill of the spring night, and he guessed it would be a long while before the sun lifted above the eastern horizon. But the colt was quiet, as though it felt perfect trust and security in the presence of this strange friend. Joey heard the brush crackle again, in a slightly different direction than that taken by the bear when the latter vanished. The black beast had turned back, and was approaching from a new angle, to investigate why the scent of the human held from the same quarter. Perhaps the human being was dead, or injured, and there was no reason why the bear should be alarmed. It seemed to Joey that he could read the black prowler's thoughts.

Time suddenly became important. Soon the bear's cunning nose would reveal the situation. If the beast realized that its human foe was helpless, it would at least attack the colt. The thought made Joey panicky.

He might make his own escape, but if he did that, it would mean he would be abandoning the colt to its fate. Frantically his mind groped for the answer. He thought of old Molly—and suddenly the answer came to him. It was a desperate venture, and it would require more courage than he seemed to possess. Yet it was all he could do unless he decided to find a tree and climb it, and leave the little colt to chance.

Old Molly, obeying instinct implanted in her by ancestors who shielded their young from savage foes, had circled widely about the point where she had hidden the colt. If Joey did that, he might succeed in drawing the bear away! He might even draw away that other unknown killer which the other forest-dwellers seemed to fear. But he would likewise be drawing danger to himself. Still, it was no worse than remaining here and waiting for danger to stalk him. He got up carefully, stared around.

The woods were once more silent. He stooped and patted the neck of the little colt, then stepped cautiously



Sounds of battle were terrifying, as Joey sat hunched, eyes round with awe.

away from the place, until he stood plainly in the moonlight. The colt made no attempt to follow, and Joey surmised, with a pang, that the youngster was weak with hunger, and had resigned itself to whatever the next moment held.

Joey took a deep breath and steeled himself for the ordeal. He walked briskly across the clearing. On the far side he crashed noisily into the brush; then, making his way as best he could by the light of the moon, he began the wide circle. But he went in an opposite direction from that taken by the bear; he didn't want to meet the beast, but rather to draw the latter on his trail. But it was a hair-raising task, plunging through the brush, coming into clear spaces where

the moon lighted his way, only to lose himself in the dense thicket a moment later, and always aware that at any instant he might come face to face with the bear or that other killer, which was somewhere near.

Sometimes he stopped to listen, but the woods were steeped in silence. He thought of the colt, wondering if the little fellow had been discovered. He dare not return to where he had left the youngster, because that might draw the bear to the same vicinity. He went on, making as much noise as possible, hoping that the sound of his progress would intimidate any predator that might be following. He had completed his second circle of the clearing when he paused again, gripped by a sudden feeling of dan-



ger. Something was following him, and very close! Likewise, danger lay ahead; a sixth sense told him that.

He had the impulse to run, but fought against it; this was no time to show fear, nor lose his head. He was trapped, yet there might be a way out. Just to the left of him was a second-growth fir with a trunk not too big for his arms to span. Breathlessly, and making as little noise as possible, he climbed the tree and settled himself among limbs twenty feet from the ground.

There was only a brief wait; then he heard that muffled sound in the brush once more. The moon had dipped behind the tops of the bigger trees, but he could make out a dark shadow moving on the ground which

he had just quitted. Probably out of curiosity rather than with any intention of attacking, the bear had struck his trail and followed him. The shadow advanced, apparently puzzled momentarily at the ending of the boy's tracks. It vanished behind a clump of brush—and pandemonium broke loose.

Joey heard the bear, whose whining squeal was like a speeding circular saw biting through green timber; yet there was another sound, a blood-chilling cry which began on a low note and swept to a screaming crescendo. Then the two explosive outbursts blended into a grisly duet that made him tremble. The bear, intent on trailing the boy, had walked into the ambush intended for Joey.

But now the boy knew the identity of Molly's slayer, not alone because of that savage scream, but because a patch of moonlight revealed the two fighting beasts. "Cougar!" he breathed in awe. He caught a glimpse of a lithe, cattish form locked in combat with the bear, and understanding came. The great cat had slain Molly, and, characteristically, had raked debris over what remained of his kill. He had returned to it, and the wilderness folk had learned of his coming and had prudently become silent. He must have discovered the bear's presence, and regarded it as a threat to possession of his kill—and between bear and cougar there is a natural age-old feud as undying as between dog and cat. These savage rivals had clashed, mutual hatred driving all else from their minds. Joey's ruse in drawing the bear into the ambush, and then climbing the tree, had brought into violent conflict the two most dangerous actors in this primitive drama.

Sounds of battle were terrifying, a discordant medley of bawls, squeals and screams, and Joey sat hunched up there in the tree, eyes round with awe and apprehension, trusting that he would be forgotten. So long as these killers fought, the colt would be safe. How the battle was going, there was no way of knowing; all that he saw was fragmentary movement now and then—shadowy forms upreared, meeting, then fighting on the ground, but never silent. Their hair-raising defiance of each other seemed as important as did fang and claw. Minutes slipped by, but the battle-sounds diminished.

Then it was done, and silence came. Presently Joey heard a crackling of brush, which he guessed would be the bear moving away. Farther off, in another direction, the cougar coughed as though in pain. No issue had been decided by the battle, but both beasts had been severely mauled, and they wanted nothing more now than to sulk in quiet and repair their injuries. Joey felt secure in the presence of a miracle.

By and by, when the east was gray-ing with the false dawn, he slid down the tree and made his way to where the star-faced colt lay hidden in the thicket, weak but still alive, the jacket still buttoned about his neck and foreshoulders. Faintly, the boy heard his father calling; apparently he too had followed Molly's track. The boy feasted his eyes on the colt, and pride of possession brimmed in him. This colt was his, won through ordeal, saved from being wolf-bait. Joey recollected that he had found Molly's motherless baby just as the forest shadows were growing long, and he thought that "Sundown" would be a mighty fine name for his prize.



Free

BETWEEN gate-tower and curtain wall, a narrowing alley led to a bricked-up doorway—part of the precautions that had not saved Cirencester. Here Eidol the Tall came, lone and limping. Halting, he looked at the blocked portal, and smiled his crooked smile, then turned to face the oncoming white-shirted spearmen of Gloucester. Here was the end of all his wanderings!

They came at him eagerly, with the confidence of conquerors. They jostled one another, and their long shafts rang against the walls. Eidol's tiny buckler of black bull's hide fended their points, while his long-sword's notched gray blade flashed and grew ruddy. Dust rose from trampling feet. Men grunted, swore, gasped. Steel clashed. Lopped spearheads flew, pinwheeling. Sickly-sweet fresh blood tainted the air. Gray blade singing, Eidol sang with it, the old song of his race:

*Blood, wine and glee
Sun, to thee—
Blood, Wine and Glee!*

Word by word, he dealt his stabs among them. His blade built a rising rampart of flesh and fallen spears. Still the men of Gloucester pressed in. Fighting without pause, Eidol knew he neared the end, as his arm tired. Then a warhorn brayed. The stubborn Gloucesterian infantry drew back to the alley's mouth.

Behind his barrier, Eidol waited. It was good to rest his arm, but there was menace in the pause. His leg

would stiffen, and—were they sending archers or slingers along the wall-top? If so, he would not wait passive for the blow, but charge and cut his way as far into the enemy as he could. . . . Clashing sword on buckler-boss of dented bronze, he sang on:

*I've drunk wine and gore
In the war—
I've drunk wine and gore!*

Men came shouldering through the Gloucester spearmen—fresh men, helmed and shirtd in bright metal, long-mustached, sword-bearing, blue-trousered, stepping proudly with green shields lifted. Eidol the Tall waited their coming, chanting softly:

*Fight of the fell steel
Death to feel—
Oh! Fight of the fell steel!*

These would be the picked warrior-companions of the King of Gloucester. Weapon-skilled, panoplied like princes, they eyed him calmly. They would be noting the gashed leathern buckler, the sprung blade of his sword, his shaggy vest of black bull's hide, the blood clotted on his trowsers-leg. . . .

"My boon, Lord Wortemir!" spoke one, his voice boyish and eager.

A gilded helm nodded. "Yours he is, Moryen."

Moryen came in, lithe, quiet, deadly quick. His lifted shield of vivid green flashed with bronze and bright enamel. Behind it, his eyes flashed with a light Eidol had seen before. For all his calm student's face, here was a killer. . . .

The tall man waited. Moryen's point flicked at his knee, at his face—then whipped backhand at Eidol's bare lean neck. An inch from his throat, Eidol parried. Steel screamed on steel. Moryen's blade went up and up, in glittering circles, to vanish over the wall. Eidol heard the amazed gasp of Moryen's comrades.

As if he had planned it so, Moryen sprang and grappled. Shield-arm encircling Eidol's waist, he bored his helm's crest into the tall man's chest as his hand sought the hilt of his dagger. Unable to slash, Eidol gained an instant as Moryen's numbed fingers fumbled at the jostling hilt. In that instant the long-sword's heavy pommel chopped downward at the gap between helm and mail. The dagger spilled from Moryen's fingers. Eidol shoved him backward. . . . His rampart had a bright coping.

There was silence. The golden-helmed man stepped forward, right hand upheld. His voice boomed in that narrow space. "Will you hold to the fair play of fighting men?"

"What do you want?"

"To see if my *rhiallu*—my host-comrade—is beyond leeching or no."

"Take him," said Eidol.

THE wide-shouldered man came striding warily among the fallen. He glanced at Eidol, who stood with point to pavement, equally wary. The Lord Wortemir bent forward quickly. His hairy heavily braceleted arms lifted Moryen easily. . . . The Gloucesterians clustered about him, as he put the stricken warrior down softly. Then, a keening cry:

"Moryen is slain! The raven-feeder, the foremost shield, the red-handed battle-reaper! *Dial! Dial!* Vengeance for brave Moryen! Hew the lank rogue in gobbets! *Di-al!*"

The Lord Wortemir silenced them with lifted hand. "You say well. This vengeance is mine."

"No!" An older man sprang forward. "Lord, it is unmeet for you to bicker with such a churl. Let me—"

Wortemir's hand thrust him staggering. "God's curse in the kitchen!" Wortemir bellowed. "Little sport

Swordsman

I've had this day, with the fat burghers bleating for mercy at the sight of sharp steel. And now you'd cheat me. Who of you is set over me? God's curse in the kitchen!" He glared at them, and there was no answer. He turned to face Eidol.

"Eidol took a hobbling step forward. Archers were filing along the wall-top, trim white Gloucestersians, coming with bows bent! This was it, the end, the final fling. . . . He sang:

*Glee of dance and song
And of battle-throng.
Battle, dance and song!
Let the sword-blades swing
In a ring!
Let—*

A SPIRITED STORY OF ANCIENT BRITAIN
AFTER THE ROMANS LEFT AND SMALL
KINGDOMS BATTLED FOR LEADERSHIP OF
THIS SEAT OF MARS . . . THIS LITTLE
WORLD . . . THIS REALM, THIS ENGLAND.

by PAUL
JOHNSTONE



"God's curse in the kitchen!" Wortemir bellowed. "Little sport I've had this day!" And swung blue-burnished sword in a hissing circle, tossed it tower-high.

The Lord Wortemir of Gloucester lifted shield of green and gold, lowered crimson-feathered crest, swung blue-burnished sword in a hissing circle, tossed it tower-high. It fell, turning over and over. Wortemir caught it by the hilt, and rushed.

Prince of warriors and pallid wanderer, they closed with the rush of swooping eagles. Sparks bloomed from meeting blades. Shields boomed hollowly. Eidol writhed away from a stab that grazed his cheek. His counter bit crimson feathers from Wortemir's crest, and the Gloucestrian staggered, but his strong shield turned the following thrust. Eidol bobbed under a slash, thrust again—the linked mail held. The wanderer grimaced. Under the gold, hard steel!

STEP by step, Wortemir drove him back, till Eidol's shoulders touched the bricks of the filled-in postern. His stop-thrust missed the prince's grinning, mustached face. The blue blade licked at his legs. Off balance, he tried to cover with the buckler. . . . Too late, he knew it for a feint, saw his foe's sword whip up, around and down, whistling toward his unguarded head. *Clang!* Brick-dust showered on his bent head. Amazed that he still lived, Eidol lifted his eyes. Wortemir's plump face was a mask of dismay, as he stared at the sword-hilt clutched in his right hand. Swinging in an overhand chop, he had shattered his blade on the projecting bricks of the old postern. Arm extended, shield away, the war-lord was for that instant, defenseless.

Now, said the swordsman's instinct. Now, *strike and slay!* The battered gray blade of Eidol whistled up, and poised.

Perhaps it was the comedy of the goggling blue eyes of his foe, the round mouth open under the brown mustache. Perhaps it was his lifelong feeling for the fair play of fighting men. It happened so quickly that Eidol could not be sure, but *something* checked his striking arm. Gray eyes looked into blue—and Eidol laughed, ringingly, heartily.

The green-and-gold shield swung between them. As if that movement released some invisible restraint, Eidol slashed. The shield boomed, and chips of enamel flew. Wortemir threw the heavy bronze hilt. Bobbing, Eidol felt it brush through his black hair. Slashing as he straightened, his edge met only air, and he went to knees and elbows as his wounded leg buckled. His foe was breaking ground nimbly, still facing him with shield high. Backward he sprang, over the tangled barricade, back to the ranks of his men. And Eidol laughed.

"Can ye laugh with a *saeth* in your tripes, tall fellow?"

Eidol stared up. Standing twelve feet above his head, back braced against the serrated battlements, a stocky archer showed white teeth and a cocked bow aimed downward. So did a half-dozen farther along the wall-top. The black buckler jerked up—Eidol knew with what futility. At such range even the best mail was useless, and they could scarcely miss. He gritted teeth, bracing himself for the piercing shock of yard-long iron-tipped shafts, driven by those rough yew bows, which only one trained from boyhood could bend. Like a trapped beast, he awaited the finishing blow.

No arrow flew. And the men on the wall laughed heartily. Eidol realized that had he struck down Wortemir, in that moment he would have been transfixed by many shafts. And he wished that he had struck—*then* they would not have laughed!

Wortemir did not laugh. His voice pealed like a trumpet. "No, you dolts! Hold fire! He is mine to fight. Watch the wall and roofs for snipers." And the bowmen on the wall bobbed their heads. "Aye, Lord," answered one. "We were but sporting."

A NEW sword in his hand, Wortemir was coming back. Eidol got to his feet. So that was his doom. A sword-death if he lost to the panoplied Gloucestrian, an arrow-death if he won! Some of the archers were sitting, legs dangling, peering down. His end, to be their sport! He, Eidol, who. . . . He shut that out. Clashing blade on shield-boss, he chanted defiance.

*Earth, Earth, Earth and Fire!
Fire, Fire, Waves and Oak!
Waves, Earth, Fire and Steel!*

It was an old, old song. It had come in with the men who built the gigantic stone-piled ring fortresses of the West Country. Few could sing it now. Its end was near, and his.

Wortemir of Gloucester was in no hurry to close. He paused to flex his right wrist, jarred by the impact that had broken his blade. "You sing your own death-song, tall man," he observed grimly.

"I sing the old song my forefathers sang," answered Eidol, very solemnly. "It is a good song, and a lifter of hearts. Blood, wine and glee—do you know a better, for a man with his back to a wall?" He smiled his lopsided smile.

"Am I a bard?" growled Wortemir impatiently. "Why are you so happy, you with your bane before you?"

"I will tell you, golden man." Eidol's voice held the rhythm of his chant. "A homeless, kinless, wandering man—that is what I have been. To Cirencester I came, offering my

sword to King Claudius. His steward turned me away, for the leanness of me, and the meanness of my gear. Aye, and he said that his king had no need of more rascal soldiers, because he was now strengthened by his alliance, offensive and defensive, with the King of Gloucester. Truly, a profitable alliance!"

"Speak of what concerns you!" rumbled the Gloucestrian.

"That concerned me. For I would have been on my way this morning, but ere cockcrow your folk came over the wall, swords out, and never a one asking whether I was paid to fight or not. So I fought. I was a man again, and the old song came to hearten me on. I fought with armored men, and I was not afraid. So in the end I was driven into this place, and it a good enough place for a rambling man to die, with the wide sky overhead. It is good with me, this way. You may slay me, if luck is with you, but I do not think you will break my courage. And that is good with me."

Wortemir looked him over again. Savoring these moments, he had no wish to hurry the game to its ending. "It is a bold man you are, and you not paid to fight. Will you put a name to yourself?"

Eidol's pale eyes shone oddly, but his grin was a boy's grin. "Will you, golden man?"

The heavy chin lifted. "Wortemir am I, son and Captain of the Household to Wortigern, King of Gloucester. That is who I am. Now, who are you?"

"It is not a name that a King's son would know. Eidol, a free swordsman."

WORTEMIR showed white teeth under his shaggy mustache. "Good is knowing who you face! Now Eidol, you are no man of this Caer, nor of him who was its king."

"True for you. I am no man's man but my own."

Wortemir looked him up and down. A long man, and gaunt, but not easily broken. You could not tell his age. No fear was on that seamed hatchet-face, and the eyes. . . . Wortemir had to know what the fire that burned there meant. He had to know for sure.

"Good," he said, at last. "Now, it might be friendship between us, if you were the man for my work."

"I will hear of the work."

Wortemir chuckled; yet his shield and sword were ready. "That is not hard to tell. I have many prisoners, taken with no promise given. It is ill to guard so many. Now, all of them have necks." His smile broadened happily. "And you have a sword. With their hands tied, it is easy work, and the fine pay in it. What is your word?"

"This is my word!" Eidol lunged in, sprung blade hissing. Hacking and slashing, he panted: "Free born—I die free—no man's butcher! Come on, play the game out!" For the prince of Gloucester, blocking skillfully, was retreating faster than his lame leg could follow. He paused, glanced up at the archers. They watched, as at a play.

Wortemir held up his sword, cross-wise under his chin, asking for parley. "Think, man!" he urged. "Your life is in it."

"A man lives after his life," said Eidol, "but not after his honor."

"An old saying," nodded Wortemir. "But is it yours?"

"For life or death or whatever, it is what I say! Will you stand there gabbing all day?"

Wortemir of Gloucester, that jolly, careless killer of men, laughed a laugh that rang back from the high walls. "Put down that sword, hero!" he commanded. "If you had said yes, *you would have been the one to die. . .* Free you are, and all the roads of the world open to you. But—I need stout men in the House-host. Eidol, free swordsman—would you follow me?"

Eidol gazed at him somberly. He was taller than the gold-bedecked prince—yes, and older, he thought. But Wortemir's mailed shoulders were wide as a door, his jaw like jutting rock. A young man, hard, quick to strike—dangerous as fire in a dry wood. With him, it would be no easy life. . . . Eidol lifted his sword, pressed it against the black bull's hide over his heart. Then he took the bent, wet blade in his two hands, offering the hilt to Wortemir, who took it silently. Then Eidol spoke; "To the end, Chief, and the last end of it!"

EIDOL stood beneath the Red Dragon standard, in the broad, clean-paved Forum, facing the huge Basilica that was city hall and palace in one. He knew himself for a scarecrow figure among the trim gentlemen of the House-host. He stood patiently as the long business of the re-ordering of a taken city passed before his eyes—eyes that were gray, thoughtful, observant, seeking. . . .

The great Basilica, pride of Roman Corinium, now Caer Cerin, Cirencester to be, was of warm tan Cotswold stone, faced with snowy marble. Full three hundred and thirty feet in length, its classic lines spoke of Rome's far heyday, but it bore little sign of three centuries of use. Close to the broad steps leading to the entrance portico stood the glittering warriors of the House-host. Beside and behind them were company on company, spearmen, bowmen, slingers, swart-bearded Gwentians, kilted Gaels, the little armies of the client



*Illustrated by
Frederick Chapman*

Eidol gained an instant. . . . Then the dagger spilled from Moryen's fingers.

princes who followed King Wortigern for the crumbs from his table of conquest, each marshaled under its own standard. Other groups were still filing in to take places for review. Men talked and laughed loudly, gay with relief after danger. Centurions strode back and forth, bawling orders, tightening up the ranks, disputing precedence with their equals. The host was jubilant with easy victory. All but Eidol. He stood silent, wondering if his sudden impulse to accept Wortemir's offer had been a mistake. After what he knew of kings—

A trumpet sounded, and the chattering troops came to rigid attention. Men came out onto the Basilica porch. Eidol did not need to be told that their central figure was King Wortigern. Purple-robed and cased in gilded mail, his wrinkled brow circled and his neck torqued with gold, the King was stiff, unsmiling amid fawning courtiers. His head had the same arrogant tilt, his chin the same jut, as Wortemir's, but where the son was fleshy, the father was

lean, hollow-eyed and hollow-cheeked. Eidol recalled the nickname of Wortigern—Worteneu, the Very Slim. But he knew that it bore a double meaning. The crafty, restless eyes were those of a man exceeding "slim," not to be held by any pact. By today's conquest, he was now the strongest of the many kings and kinglets of what had been Roman Britain. He knew it. . . .

The voice of the King rasped out. He told his men how great they were, how superlatively great he was. To the outer fringe of cowed but curious townsfolk, he promised a new ruler, better than Claudius had ever been. He also announced a levy of one-third of all movable property, to be paid by nightfall on pain of death. It was a long speech and a poor one, the fighting men listening resignedly, as to an oft-told tale. He finished at last, and was dutifully cheered, the townsmen echoing feebly.

A page, his curling auburn hair shoulder-long, made a nimble knee before the King. Wortigern snatched the long, silver-mounted horn, and

drank greedily, his thin tuft of black beard rising, Adam's apple bobbing in his scrawny neck, until the horn was drained. A courtier solicitously wiped red wine from his whiskers with a linen napkin. Wortigern returned the empty horn to the kneeling page, and then belched loudly. His men cheered.

Wortemir took his father's place on the portico. He called each commander forward in turn, to report on casualties. He gave billeting orders. Eidol began to feel very tired. His wounded leg throbbed, his slashed cheek stung. He had not eaten since last night, and it was now midday. The thrill of combat had died, leaving only weariness and apprehension. He had the Prince's word, but the Prince was the son of Wortigern the Very Slim. . . .

The trumpeter bawled out a name. Eidol wondered who would come forward. No one did. Another roar—Eidol's lordly neighbor gave him a shove. "You're Eidol? Is the name so new ye can't remember it? Get up there!" Then he chuckled loudly to the others: "He oughta lammed while he had the chance!"

Eidol stepped out of the ranks of the Housemen, into the open space before the portico. His legs were embarrassingly shaky. A ripple of amusement followed him. The warm

sunlight, flashing on the stone facade of the Basilica, would also be emphasizing his raggedness, calling attention to his matted hair, the grime silted into the hollows of his gaunt face. He must appear a forlorn, unkempt, shambling figure.

For all that, he was Eidol, free swordsman. He stood for a moment, legs wide apart and head flung back. He breathed deep of the breeze, sweeping fresh and cool off Cotswold Ridge. Then he took a long, slow stride forward, and another, letting the Prince wait for his coming. He did not kneel or bow, but stood, one step below the porch, hands on lean hips, shaggy head tilted. He wore insolence like a royal cloak. And wondered: *Can they see how I'm quaking?* The faces before him were not friendly—not even that of Wortemir. There was little hope left in Eidol the Tall. Yet he stood boldly. He stood. . . .

Young face hard, Wortemir spoke at last. "Did you not come, seeking entrance to the Caer's guard?"

"That is true."

"It could be that you will have your wish. When my dad goes back to Caer Gloew, it is I will rule here. For that I must have a *teulu*, my own house-host. I must have steadfast men. Eidol, are you such a one?"

"You could try me."

Wortemir nodded. "I shall. And now as good a time as any. Are you ready for the Test?"

"And what is that?"

"It is not yours to know. You can decline it, and go your way. Or you can take it—yours it is to choose."

Eidol took another deep breath. "Run while you can, lath of a man," intoned someone behind him.

"I will—take the Test," said Eidol.

The brown mustache twitched. "Good! It is little you have to do. Stand at the foot of the stairs, arms at your sides. Stand firm!"

Eidol obeyed, in growing puzzlement. In many a chief's house-host, the candidate for admission must fight an older member, usually with blunted weapons. This was different. . . . The hairs of his neck bristled, and he mocked his own unease with a twisted smile. How little menace

it took to put the cold mantle of terror on a man, when mystery was added!

Wortemir descended with slow steps. He drew sword, and held the edge before Eidol's eyes. "See that?"

Eidol nodded. "A good blade, and well burnished."

"It is my brother Cattigern's. Ninocan forged it, the smith of Gloucester, best in all Britain." He plucked a hair from his head, dangled it against the whetted edge. A breeze that scarcely ruffled his scarlet mantle pushed hair against steel. They scarcely seemed to touch, but the hair was severed. The hilt in his left hand, Wortemir took the point in his right, carefully keeping his fingers away from the edge. Deliberately, slowly, he bent the blade until point and pommel met. *He has ruined it*, thought Eidol. Then, with a deft gesture, Wortemir released the point. With a whisper as of rippling water, the silver-burnished blade whipped out, quivered—and stood true as before. "A named blade is this," he continued. "Fury is his name."

Eidol touched the worn hilt at his left hip. "Mine is called Little Key."

Wortemir ignored him. "Ninocan is a smith of many spells. None but himself know what ranns he chanted as Fury was forged, or what the brew in which Fury was tempered. But this is known: Fury will make two halves of a warrior, and he not knowing it until he falls apart. Some say there is a devil-spirit prisoned in the steel, filling its wielder with slaughter-fury. That I do not know, but now with Fury in my hand, I feel a longing to stir the red broth of battle—Eidol! *Would you trust your life to Fury?*"

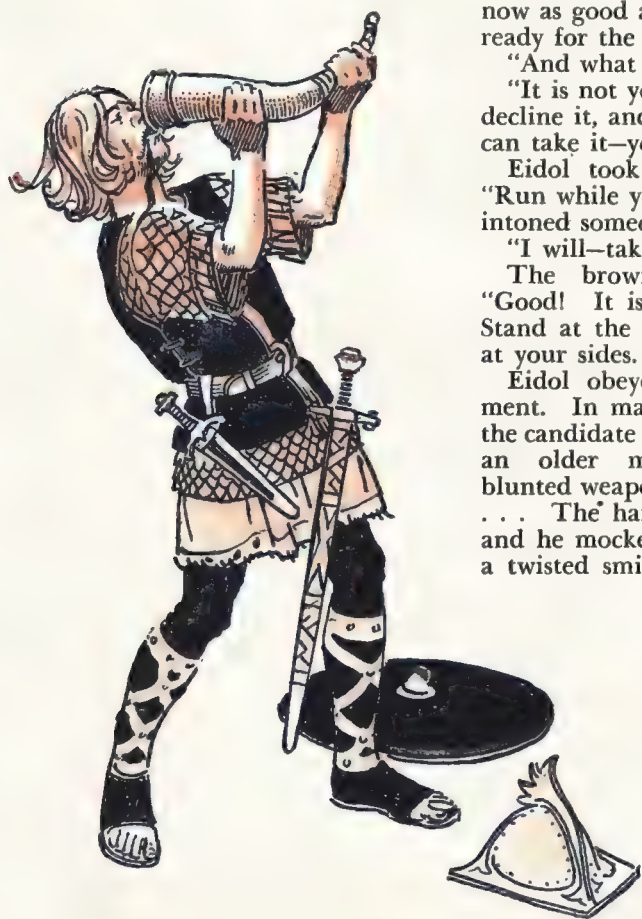
"At which end of him?"

THE Prince only chuckled softly, moving the sword before his face. The play of light on the smooth metal held his eyes. He stood on a mountain-peak, gazing down, down into rippling sunlit water, a leaping torrent. It drew him. . . . With a great effort he forced himself to look away, and the spell broke. Again he saw the wide semicircle of amused, unsympathetic faces. If Wortemir was not his friend, he had none.

"Eidol, man!" The Prince spoke as if a new idea had struck him. "It is a shave and haircut you are needing. Is it not true, my friends?" The House-host guffawed. "And no time like the present. Few men have a King's son for their barber. Eidol, will you stand firm while I shave you—close? It is yours to choose."

Eidol fought within himself, to hold his voice calm. "If it is the Test."

The sword Fury leaped high, hovered over his head, came whispering,



"Wine of the Gauls, from the cellar of King Claudius, who won't be needing it—God rest his soul."

closer, closer. And, as he plied the sword, Wortemir talked on;

"Now that I have a sharp sword in my hand, I see a lone, ragged gangrel fellow, and his ugly, lean, whiskery face looking crooked at me, out of the corners of his crafty gray eyes. It comes to my mind that I have a score to settle. Moryen, a fine lad, a noble's son, a gallant in the mead-hall, and a mighty man of his hands—Moryen is dead. A sore tale that, to the maids of Gloucester! And who slew Moryen? Why, this same impudent ruffian who now leers at me, with his long snout awry. And what should a chief do, with such a man before him, and Fury in his hand?" The steel whisper silenced, and he stood, peering up into Eidol's face.

"A true Prince would know," said Eidol flatly.

"True for you, wandering man!" Wortemir smiled a hard smile. "And I know— Hold still! Good barber am I, but I make no allowance for your moving. Stand still as stone!"

EIDOL set his teeth. The keening blade sang louder, flashed closer. If he could shut his eyes—but no! Then he would lose balance, sway into the blade's path. He fought against dizziness. He looked past the flickering steel, past the wide-shouldered prince, up to the bright-tiled roof of the towering Basilica. His cheek was fanned, then the other. There were gentle pluckings at his hair. He tried to ignore them, to fix his eyes on the trousered lady who smiled from the bas-relief above the portico. She would be Britannia, for in the Roman time this had been the capitol, and the council-house of Britannia Prima. Yesterday he had read the insipid Latin verses in which the *Rector* Septimius prided himself on his restoration of the gigantic Jupiter-column, in the days of Julian the Apostate, a century gone. Now the giant-column lay overthrown again, by the pious burghers. "Aaah!" said many mouths:

Eidol glanced down. The Prince now stood behind him, but he could see the shadow of his sword on the cobblestones, as with easy, sweeping strokes Wortemir trimmed his back-hair. Then Eidol saw what others had seen: . . .

Ten paces from his side, a man had stepped from the neat ranks of the House-host. A young man, lithe, silent, deadly quick, with slender, intent face and oddly shining eyes—Moryen. . . . Dead Moryen stood poised, right hand lifted as in salute. But between thumb and forefinger shone the slim blade—of a dagger, brown staghorn hilt uppermost. Dead Moryen swung back his arm, and his gaze never left Eidol's chest.

What wizardry was this? Had Moryen only feigned death? Was it



"Good barber am I, but I make no allowance for your moving. Stand still as stone!"

illusion? What a test! Eidol's bewildered mind raced like the wheels of an overturned chariot, but only his gray eyes moved. It was only for an instant, but in that instant his nerve held. He stood tall and lean and unflinching. Moryen took one swift stride forward, and threw. . . .

The knife went end-over-end, in almost flat trajectory. Slim blade outraced staghorn handle, and the needle-sharp point drove into Eidol's body, just under the breast-bone. Metal clanged as the knife-thrower fell under the weight of a thrown shield. But Eidol stood, the knife jutting from his body. . . .

"By Lludd and Nudd!" swore Wortemir. "Pinion him! Hold him! Death is small for such a deed. . . . Eidol, man?"

"Yours is a Test," said Eidol. "Is it over now?"

"Yes—not!" raged the Prince. "That was no part of my Test, but foul murder. I will hang every son of Morgeneu if you die—"

"Die?" Eidol laughed. He set hand to the staghorn hilt and tugged. The blade came free. He held it up, and it was clean, but the point was turned a little.

Wortemir eyed the tall man, his heavy jaw slack. "Iron plate under your vest?" he guessed.

Eidol shook his head. "It touched the edge of the buckle on my sword-baldric. That turned it a little." He tapped the heavy leather belt that hung from right shoulder to left hip. "It pierced baldric-slack and baldric, two thicknesses of stout boiled leather. The hide of the black bull stopped it at last." He slapped his shaggy vest appreciatively.

"Holy Saint Alban!" Wortemir's expletives were eclectic. "Well, he has had his chance. Now it is his to pay for." Sword lifted and head thrust forward, he strode toward the man who had thrown the dagger. The lithe young man stood proudly, though both arms were twisted behind his back by burly Housemen. "Why did you befoul my honor, and yours?" he roared.

The captive did not flinch from his wrath. His sleek head flung back defiantly; "Moryen was my *laloc*—twin-brother. That is reason enough."

"You are not Moryen?" asked Eidol.

"Moryal am I, son of Morgeneu!" boasted the captive. His fine face twisted. "A curse on my hand that failed of its purpose! Moryen would not have missed your heart."

"Moryen would not have taken a coward's chance," said Wortemir. "Take a strong belt, and bind his arms well. Now, Eidol—"

"Yes—Chief?"

"You have his dagger. Stand where you were, and give it back to him—in the throat! I will stand beside him, and if he dodges, he will feel Fury's edge."

Eidol shook his half-trimmed shock of raven hair. "It would be better with me if his hands were free."

"His hands were free enough!" raged Wortemir. "God's curse in the kitchen! Will you throw, or must I?"

EIDOL balanced the slender, wicked blade in his bony hands. "I was his target—I will give it back to him. Stand fast, Moryal!" He turned, strode back to where he had stood, turned again, and flexed his arm.

"A son of Morgeneu never flinched from steel!" called Moryal. "Andras blast you, ragged pauper—throw!"

Eidol threw, with practiced ease. The slim blade shattered on a cobblestone, between Moryal's feet.

"You missed purposely!" bellowed Wortemir. "You dolt! You—oh, Flames of Uffern!"

"It was mine to choose," reminded Eidol. "He stood boldly. If I took a son from old Morgeneu, I have given one back to him. Set him free, Prince!"

"It's a wittol you are, Eidol!" Wortemir laid Fury's edge against Moryal's throat. "Listen, false comrade—will you take *galanas*?"

The dark head tossed in disdain. "The sons of Morgeneu have never taken gold for blood. We will have vengeance, or die."

"Then die!" Fury flashed up, then checked. A bulky Houseman had stepped between them. Dark and proud like Moryal, his hard face was seamed with wrinkles, his gold-ringed arms heavy with muscle. His voice boomed. "Chief—listen! Remember the day at Red Rock Pass? I took a javelin that was meant for you, that day. It was a year before I walked again, and the wound is still hot in my side, when I am tired. Set that against Moryal's misdeed! And if it's not enough, I am Mordav, his elder brother. Slay me; let the lad go!"

Wortemir glared at him. "Flames of Uffern! Mordav, you are head of his kin here. Will you take *galanas* for Moryen?"

Mordav shook his head slowly. "I cannot. It is not our custom."

"It is no use," spoke Eidol. "I could not pay the indemnity, and even if I could, they would remember. It is bad with me, to set knights against their lord. Let me be on my way. Aurelius of Sorviodun might need an extra swordsman."

Wortemir slammed Fury back into the sheath, stood with big fists balled in baffled anger. "You shall not go! I would never have a man in my House-host who had shamed me as

Moryal did. Hear me, sons of Morgeneu! I have set Moryal's evil deed against Moryen's death in my service, and Mordav's wound, taken for me. It is a balance. . . . I know you will stand together. So go free, but GO! Be out of my Caer by next sunrise!"

Mordav nodded. "You were ever a goodly lord. Remember to keep your shield high, as I taught you—it is easier to drop than to lift. Here are my arms." He tossed his sword at the Prince's feet, began to roll up the skirt of his mail-coat. "—If somebody'll give me a hand with this cursed *lorica*—" His deep voice was shaking.

Wortemir slapped his shoulder, then stooped and picked up the sword in its sheath. "God's curse in the kitchen!" he boomed. "Keep your hardware—you've earned it a hundred times."

Mordav bowed, took the sword as a mother might take back her child. Moryal, arms freed, spat on the cobblestones. "That for your bounty!" Sword-belt, helmet, mail-coat, greaves were torn off and flung down. Wortemir half drew Fury, then slammed it back. "Get him away from me, Mordav!" he choked. The veteran took his brother's arm, dragged him away, across the Forum. As he went, young Moryal twisted to face Eidol, puffing his cheeks round to blow toward him insultingly. "There are

IN HONOR OF—

By Ed Dembitz

THE self-styled spinach capital of the world—Crystal City, Texas—boasts a statue of "Popeye," erected ten years ago to honor the comic-strip sailor who brought prosperity to the region's spinach-growers.

* * * *

CONTRIBUTIONS of wheat assisted in defraying construction costs of the monument to wheat at Newton, Kansas. This statue of "King Wheat" commemorates the arrival from Russia in 1874 of a band of Mennonite pioneers who brought with them six bushels of Turkey-red hard winter wheat. The 200,000,000 bushels of winter wheat grown last year in Kansas are descended from those first six.

* * * *

AS a tribute to thirty-eight patient friends and creditors, a businessman who finally paid off his notes and became highly solvent erected the "Friendship Monument," located in Cartersville, Georgia.

many sons of Morgeneu, dirty wizard!" he called. "While one lives you are not safe—it is not called a wood for one tree!" His brother urged him out of sight and hearing.

"How many sons has Morgeneu?" asked Eidol.

Wortemir counted on his fingers. "Fourteen, I think—there may be other young 'uns back in the hills."

Eidol whistled. "I'll give Glen Morgeneu a wide berth. Well, my way lies East—"

"That is for me to choose," said Wortemir. "You are my *rhiallu*, my host-comrade now."

"After all this? I would not be welcome."

"Do you think everyone loves the sons of Morgeneu? Don't be a wittol! Here, lads! Shake hands with your new *rhiallu*!"

"And this is Eochu the Irishman, whose blade felled King Claudius. . . . Here is Congen, a noble swordsman out of Powysland, who bears the standard. And Rinnoc the Little, who will race the wind, and beat it by two lengths. And—"

Eochu cleared his throat. "All these formalities are a little dry, don't ye think, Chief? A little dry."

Wortemir laughed. "True for you, old Gael! That has a remedy. . . . Minogan! Minogan! What's keepin' you?"

Minogan the Steward was weaving toward them, an enormous drinking-horn held in both hands. "Coming, heart's darling! Couldn't let you drink till I tesh-taysh—toasted it 't see if it was safe. But don' worry. It's wonnerfu!"

"And you the man to know!" said Wortemir.

As the horn went round, Eidol looked up. The trousered lady over the portico smiled at him. Britannia she was, the spirit of the British land, who had seen the Romans come, and had seen them go. But . . . maybe she was Fortuna too—Lady Luck. The horn was in his hands now. He lifted it high toward the smiling lady, spilling a few fragrant red drops, just for luck, and in case she had helped him. Her smile went blurry. . . . Eidol drank, blinking to clear his eyes.

"Wine of the Gauls," said Eochu the Gael. "From the cellar of King Claudius, who won't be needing it—God rest his soul. Wine of the Gauls. . . . What is your judgment on it, Eidol *rhiallu*?"

The sharp red wine burned Eidol's throat, and was warming his empty stomach. He lowered the horn, looked up at the blue sky, the drifting white clouds, the sun-gilded tiles of the Basilica, and the smiling lady. It had been long—

He swallowed hard.

"It is good with me," he said.



NO HERO

A FINE STORY BY THE DISTINGUISHED AUTHOR OF "MEN OF THE MOUNTAINS" AND "TAPS FOR PRIVATE TUSSIE."

by JESSE STUART

WHEN I could look over at the bright lights of Landsburg, I stopped to catch my breath and do some thinking. For behind me lay the dark unfruitful hills where my crops had failed. And in a shack among these hills, seven miles away, I'd left Mollie with our three little ones. "Hester, we have to have bread," was the last thing she'd said to me. "We can't go another day without some kind of relief." And when I started walking to Landsburg in the late afternoon, Mollie couldn't understand. I couldn't tell her what I had in mind.

For nature had been against me. It wasn't that I wasn't willing to work. I was willing to work. The drouth had killed my crops. I couldn't make it rain. There just wasn't anything I could do about it except see my garden truck, corn, potatoes and tobacco wilt in the hot June and July sun. All I'd worked for was lost.

Nature was against me in another way that I couldn't help. I'd grown up tall as a beanpole and slender as a poplar sapling. In August I'd tried to get work with an extra force, when the railway company was needing men. The foreman took one look at me and said: "Not heavy enough for your height. Lifting crowbars, crossties and T-rails would break you in two." Then I tried to get a job at the iron works, where they needed men. They gave me an examination and then put

me on the scales. "Underweight," the doctor said. "We can't use you." It was that way every place I tried to get work.

Nature was against me more ways than one. And now I had to do some more thinking about Mollie and our three little ones before I tackled what I had in mind to do. Jim Harris told me about something in Landsburg. It was something they begged a man to do. It was hard to get a man to do it. But it was great fun for the people to see. Jim said the Landsburg law had threatened to close the place up since one man, Hawk Weaver, was sent to the hospital.

In the distance below me I could see the bright lights along the streets, and I could see one real bright spot in the town. This was the spot where I was going. For this was the fair-ground. I could hear the shouts of happy people coming from this spot and I could hear the music of the merry-go-round.

"This way, this way," I could hear a man shout. "Three balls for the little dime, ten cents. Knock down three kitties and get yourself a quarter!" But this wasn't what I was going to do. It was harder than throwing balls at the kitties. It was something all the brave boys were afraid to do. And I wasn't brave, either. I just needed the money—I had to have some money. And when I thought about it, my heart went right up into my mouth.

But I'll be game, I thought. I'll try it. If they'll only let me try it after they see how tall I am, and almost as light as the wind.

Then I started toward the brightest spot in Landsburg. My long beanpole legs soon covered the ground. The Greenwood County people and the city people of Landsburg had filled the fair-ground. People were almost running over each other. They were standing in line to buy baseballs to throw at the kitties. They were standing in line to buy rings to throw over pegs where knives, alarm clocks, blankets and pans were hanging. They were waiting to ride the merry-go-round and the merry-mixup. They were standing packed like sardines in front of a tent where two women danced and where a man beat a drum. And when the drummer and the dancers went into the tent, and the announcer told them the "greatest show on earth" would be inside the tent, they pushed each other down trying to get tickets before the tent was filled. Money was flowing like water, and everybody was happy. I wished for a little of the money I saw coming from the fat pocketbooks. But my time was coming.

Lefty Simmons, Landsburg's local boy, stepped upon the platform in boxing trunks and sparred with Slugger Martin.

"Ladies and gentlemen, last evening Lefty Simmons and 'Slugger' Stevens

fought an even match," the announcer shouted through a megaphone, "and this evening they will fight to a finish. It's your local boy, Lefty, against the great and powerful Slugger Stevens! Ladies and gentlemen, right this way to see one of the greatest fights of all times!"

When Slugger and Lefty went inside the tent, the crowd rushed for tickets. I knew that my time would come next. It would come after this fight. For the people who loved to watch a fight would love to watch what I was going to try to do. Some of them might want to see a man killed. Though I wasn't sure about that. Yet, for years afterward they would talk about seeing Hester King's body mangled at the Landsburg Fair. But I didn't want to die. I'd thought this thing through, and it was the only way I could see to make some quick money. I'd heard all my life, "Where there is a will, there's a way." I had the will—and I'd thought of the way.

There was one more night of the Landsburg Fair. And when I waited outside for the fight to be over, I heard screams and shouts of the people inside. "Kill 'im, Lefty, kill 'im!" I could hear men and women shout and scream. It must have been some fight, and a lot of people got worked up about it. For the Landsburg marshal and two deputies had to go inside the tent. But when the manager brought the fighters back onto the platform, he held up both their hands and said it was another draw, and they would fight it out to a finish tomorrow night, the last night of the Landsburg Fair. They had fought to five draws.

"Your local Lefty is some fighter," the announcer said. "He's stayed with the mighty Slugger for five nights!"

A great roar of applause went up from the people. For Lefty's face looked red and beaten, and there was blood on his lips and nostrils.

"Don't leave now, folks, don't leave," the announcer shouted through his megaphone. "Stand by for an important announcement!"

I knew what was coming now.

"WE are looking for a man to stay with old Bruin five minutes tonight," the man shouted. "Is there a man in the crowd that will wrestle the greatest wrestler in the world? Is there a man that will take a chance wrestling this three-hundred-and-eighty-six-pound bear? If there is a man that will stay in the cage with him five minutes, he will receive twenty-five dollars! If a man will stay with him ten minutes, he will receive fifty dollars. He will receive twenty-five dollars for every five minutes he stays with old Bruin! That's a lot of money, folks! And if he wrestles Bruin," he shouted, "he will get an extra one hundred dollars."



"I'll try it, sir," I said, holding up my hand, which was high above the crowd.

I looked around me, and not another hand was up.

"That damn' bear'll kill you, man!" a big fellow said to me. "Hawk Weaver is in the hospital over a-tryin' to ride that bear! Ain't you afraid of 'im, Slim?"

"Yes, I am," I said.

"What are you a-gettin' in the cage with 'im for then?" the man asked.

I didn't answer him. And I heard sighs go up all over the fair-ground.

"Another victim," said a little man standing near me.

"Then come up here, Slim," the announcer said. "Let the crowd have a look at you!"

When I walked upon the platform, everybody laughed. The announcer looked me over, and he laughed. Maybe he laughed at my big feet and long hands. But the whole crowd laughed, and they pushed up closer.

"How tall are you, and how much do you weigh?" the announcer asked.

"Six feet five, and weigh one-thirty-five," I said.

"Ever do any wrestling, Slim?" he asked me.

"Never did," I said.

"What do you do for a living?" he asked me.

"Right now I'm unemployed," I said.

The announcer asked me my name and where I lived, and I told him.

"This is Hester King from Buckrun Hollow back in Greenwood County," the announcer shouted to the crowd, through his megaphone. "He's six-feet-five, weighs one-thirty-five, and he's never done any wrestling! And right now he's unemployed."

"He'll be employed when old Bruin gets a-hold of 'im," some man shouted from the crowd.

"Stomp old Bruin with your big Number 13's," another man laughed.

"Slap his face with your big fire-shovel hand," another man screamed.

Then everybody laughed. More people gathered in to have a look at me. It was the first time I'd ever faced a crowd like this. Everybody on the fair-ground was shoving closer.

"Nobody's stayed with that bear three minutes," said a big man that



"He's six-feet-five, weighs one-thirty-five, and he's never done any wrestling!"

pouring into the tent like honey bees into a hive. Only the people made more noise. It was a louder buzzing, and there were so many jumbled words that I couldn't understand what anybody was saying, except the word *kill* pretty often.

When I was ready, the manager told me the referee, Johnny Norris, who owned the bear, would see that Bruin didn't hurt me, for he could handle him. He warned me not to be too scared, and to stay with Bruin two minutes if I could.

"I must stay longer than that," I said. "I must stay five minutes!"

The manager laughed as he pushed back a flap of the tent, and we walked into the arena beneath the big tent where the people were crowded close to the cage. The big black bear was inside the cage, walking around, looking between the iron bars at the people. He'd hold to the iron bars with his paws as he circled the cage and looked at the crowd.

"He'd like to get among us," said a well-dressed woman. "My, if I was a man, I wouldn't want to wrestle that ugly thing!"

When I walked among the crowd, everybody screamed with laughter.

"An Ichabod Crane wrestling that heavy bear!" someone screamed.

People looked at my long skinny legs and wondered how they'd hold me up. They looked at my little waist measure.

"Not any bigger around the waist than the coupling pole in a jolt-wagon," a big man said as I passed him.

"But look what feet and hands," another man said.

"Bear won't care for them," said a freckle-faced man with a bow-tie that went up and down with his Adam's apple as he talked.

"Hate to see that poor man get what Hawk Weaver got," I heard someone say in a low voice. For I was near the cage door.

"Timekeepers here?" the announcer asked.

"Yep, we're here," said a tall man. "Kim Kiefer of Landsburg will help me keep the time!"

"All right, Al, you and Kim start your watches," Johnny said as he unlocked the cage door.

I THOUGHT of Mollie and my three little ones. That was the last thought I had before I stooped nearly double to go through the cage door.

"Shake hands with Bruin," Johnny said. "He expects it. If you do, it will be easier for you!"

Bruin knew what his duties were. For he came up to meet me, and Johnny stepped aside when he reached me

stood below me resting his hand on the platform. "That's the catch. See, you don't get anything unless you stay five minutes! Hogg Morton stayed the longest. He stayed two minutes! Had the bear down once! But it like to 've kilt old Hogg before the referee could get 'im off! It's a mint of gold for this fair!"

"Buddy Walker didn't stay ten seconds," said a man standing beside the man that had spoken of Hogg Morton. "Bear just knocked him against the cage once, and that was all there was to it!"

"How long do you think you can stay with Bruin?" the announcer asked me.

"Five minutes," I said. "Maybe longer."

"Hester King says he can stay with Bruin five minutes, maybe longer," the announcer shouted gleefully.

"That's what Hester King thinks," a man shouted from the crowd. "That bear's a man-killer and shouldn't be allowed to wrestle civilized men at a street fair!"

"Then Mr. King says he'll stay with the bear five minutes or longer, and

you say he won't," the announcer said. "Let's see who is telling the truth! Maybe this tall man will surprise us!"

"Old Ichabod, the beanpole, will soon find out," somebody shouted from the crowd. "There won't be any draw in this wrestling match!"

"He wants to wrestle mighty bad," another man shouted. "Or, he must need the money!"

"Wait until you see this man in wrestling trunks," the announcer said. "You'll see something. Worth the price of admission, folks!"

I followed the announcer from the platform down into the tent. The crowd surged up to buy tickets. When I went into a little dressing-room and started taking off my clothes, I thought about Mollie, little Naomi, Sophie and Hester, Jr. Then I thought about going into the cage with the bear. I wondered just what would happen.

And what if I could stay with him five minutes, I thought. Ten minutes! Fifteen, twenty, twenty-five minutes! One hundred and twenty-five dollars! What a fortune!

While I put my skinny legs into the big wrestler's trunks, I heard people

his paw. I shook his paw gently. And everybody in the tent became so quiet you could have almost heard a pin drop on the dirt-packed floor outside the cage. And my shaking Bruin's paw gently didn't help matters a bit. He backed away, and then he came clumsily toward me with the full force of his three hundred-odd pounds. He pushed me against the side of the cage with a wallop. He acted like he wanted to finish me in a hurry.

"Won't be long," said the freckle-faced man with the bow-tie that worked up and down on his Adam's apple. He held his face close to the cage and peered between the bars. But he was surprised when I got back to my feet and ran in between old Bruin's outstretched forepaws. That's the spot all the wrestlers didn't want to get. Old Bruin tried squeezing on me, but I was too small for him to get the full power of his powerful arms. I hugged close to Bruin and put my hands gently on his back. Then he shoved me back and slapped at me again. He knocked me against the side of the cage. But it didn't hurt me, and I didn't stay long. I ran back into his arms.

"Three minutes," said Kim Kiefer. "Longest anybody has stayed yet!"

The people surged closer. They packed around the cage.

"Down in front!" I heard them yell from the far sides of the arena. "Down in front!"

"Will he stay five minutes?" I heard wrestling fans asking each other.

I have to stay five minutes, I thought. And if I can just do—

But old Bruin slapped me awfully hard, and I hit the bars of the cage and saw stars.

"Four minutes," Kim Kiefer said.

"Three minutes and fifty seconds," said Al, the street fair's timekeeper.

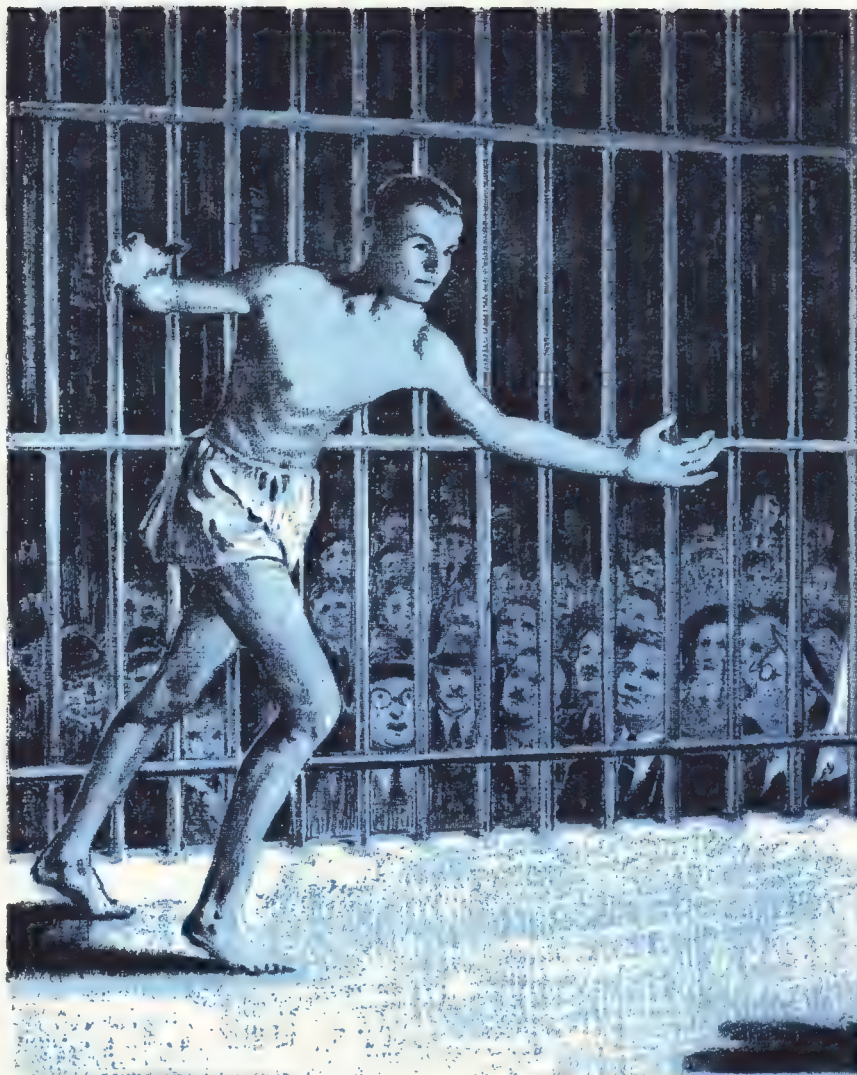
"You're a little off," Kim Kiefer said. "My watch is right."

I was clinched with Bruin again, and I let my hands fall gently up and down his back like you'd rub a piece of silk on a washboard. Bruin wasn't as rambunctious with me as he had been. Johnny Norris looked at us clinched there, and my chin down on old Bruin's head. We stood in the middle of the cage, and the long lanky muscles in my beanpole legs heaved higher than they ever had before. It looked like we were each trying to throw the other on the cage floor.

"Five minutes," Kiefer shouted.

"Seconds yet," Al said.

We stood there paw-locked and arm-locked, and time was fleeting. Once Johnny Norris passed around us, and he had a worried look on his face. But I watched the referee to see that he didn't prod the bear to make him try to finish me. Spectators were watching through the bars. Wom-



I did a little footwork around the cage until his front paws

en were sitting upon men's shoulders so they could see into the cage. They were watching Johnny Norris, too. Hundreds of eyes were trained on him as he moved around through the cage with a mysterious air and a worried look on his face.

"Nine minutes," Kiefer shouted.

Al didn't say anything.

One minute more, I thought. Just one minute more!

Then Bruin started pushing me. And I braced my feet away out from him, and I leaned like a prop. Yet, I had my chin on his head.

"Ten minutes," Kiefer said.

"Lacks ten seconds of being ten minutes," Al grunted.

Then Bruin put his red tongue out like a tired dog. I felt his hot breath sizzle past my ear. The sweat was pouring from my face and running in little streams down my body. Holding up a bear as big as Bruin wasn't an easy task.

"Has he hypnotized that bear?" someone shouted.

And just about that time, Bruin pushed me to the floor. But he didn't come down on me. He panted harder,

and everybody could see his long red tongue and his full set of pretty white teeth. He stood in the middle of the cage like a wrestler that had won.

"Fourteen minutes," Kiefer said.

Then there were shouts that went up from the people.

"He might even wrestle old Bruin yet," the fellow said who was wearing the bow-tie. He said the words so fast the bow-tie jumped up and down his neck with his Adam's apple like a tree frog.

I came back to my feet, and Bruin came to meet me slapping gently with his paws. I did a little footwork around the cage until his front paws were spread apart, and then I rushed in and clinched Bruin.

"Fifteen minutes," Kiefer said.

SEVENTY-FIVE dollars, I thought. Give me five minutes more.

And when I put my chin back on Bruin's head and braced my feet, with my big hands planted on Bruin's back, this time, Bruin went down, and I went down beside him. Johnny Norris ran up to look at our shoulders. Al ran up and looked between the



*Illustrated by
Charles Chickering*

were spread apart; then I rushed in and clinched Bruin.

bars. And the crowd screamed loud enough to raise the tent.

Bruin's weight on my left arm hurt a little. But my right arm was around his neck. My chin was still on top of his head. And we lay there, stomach to stomach, side by side, in wrestling embrace.

"What's wrong here?" Johnny Norris said to the fair's timekeeper. "Al, you go get the boss!"

"But who will keep time with Kiefer?" Al asked.

"I will," Johnny said as Al started pushing his way through the crowd.

"Referee can't serve in two capacities at one time," a big man with a handlebar mustache said as he put his face against the cage bars.

Shouts went up again from the people.

"Nineteen minutes," Kiefer said.

"Ten seconds till," Johnny said.

"Who said old Ichabod Crane couldn't wrestle," said the man with the Adam's apple. "He'll ride that bear yet!"

They didn't know it, but I knew Bruin was ready for a rest on the floor, even if we were in a wrestlers' clinch.

When the boss, Solway Meadows, came running into the tent, his face looked as sour as if he'd bitten a green persimmon when he looked inside the cage and saw us lying side by side.

"Twenty minutes," Kiefer shouted.

"What's wrong, Johnny?" Solway Meadows asked.

"Old Bruin just can't ride 'im," Johnny said.

"Now you're a-talkin'," somebody shouted. "Old Ichabod Crane will ride that bear yet! He's some wrestler!"

"Old Bruin didn't find Hawk Weaver when he got hold of old Ichabod," said the big sports fan with the handlebar mustache. He tried to stick his face between the cage bars, and he worked his mustache like a rabbit works its whiskers.

"Twenty-four minutes," Kim Kiefer shouted.

"Old Ichabod said he'd stay with old Bruin five minutes and maybe longer," the big sports fan shouted and wiggled his handlebar mustache. "He's a-doin' more than he said he would!"

"Twenty-five minutes," Kim Kiefer shouted.

Then the bear rolled over on his back.

The loudest scream of all went up from the crowd. There were screams, shouts, and whistles.

"Look at the shoulders there, Referee," the old sports fan shouted. "Let's have the count. Bruin's down! He's down!"

Bruin didn't offer to get up. His big mouth was open, and you could count the white teeth in his mouth and take a look at his pretty red tongue.

"You must have played my bear foul," Johnny Norris said.

"I did not," I panted. "You'll see Bruin's not hurt. He's tired but happy!"

"First time that bear was ever ridden," Solway Meadows said.

"First time anybody ever stayed with 'im over two minutes," Al said.

BECAUSE of the shouts of the people, it was hard to hear another word. When Johnny Norris got Bruin up from my arm, he found out whether he was hurt or not. Bruin gave him a lick on top of his head that sent Johnny reeling toward the other side of the cage, where he did a little dance on wobbly legs as he slumped to the floor.

"What do you know about that?" Al asked.

"I didn't hurt old Bruin," I said to Solway Meadows.

"What did you do to him?" Solway asked.

"Two hundred and twenty-five dollars!" cried the freckle-faced man wearing the bow-tie. "Ichabod Crane rode old Bruin."

Solway Meadows led me through the cage door, while Al dragged Johnny outside.

"Same thing old Bruin done to Hawk Weaver," a tall bearded man said as the old sports fan with the big mustache and the young man with the bow-tie and as many others as could gather around me lifted me up on their shoulders. They carried me out of the tent, and over the fair-grounds, shouting: "Here's Ichabod Crane—he rode the bear!"

Everybody was laughing and shouting. Some of the girls waved their hands at me and threw handkerchiefs toward me. I was a hero for that night, and I didn't even get a chance to tell them how I did it. I didn't have a chance to explain that I once owned a pet bear in the Wofer Peninsula of Michigan, when I was trying to cut cordwood, and that I found out then how much a bear liked to be rubbed and smoothed between the ears and on the stomach. Besides, how did I know that *this* bear would let me do it? Maybe I was a hero—maybe I wasn't. Anyway, for that night, I was.

One *for the* Jammer

THE clubhouse at Eastern University had a visitors' wing, and Doug Vaughan could see the Tech men come in the bus, debark and march through the door to the dressing-rooms: big men, with the reckless air that all Tech football men seemed to possess. He had seen Tech teams before. He had seen Ducky Roberts before.

Ducky was the biggest quarterback in college circles. He was one of the best, too. He was handsome in an ugly fashion; he was slope-shouldered and slope-browed. He was quick as an ape and strong as a bull. He got down from the bus and stared arrogantly around, spraddling long legs.

Mary Snow came, hurrying a little, crying: "Hi, Ducky! Hi, you big character!"

"My little chickadee!" said Ducky in his quarterback's carrying voice. He swung her off her feet, held her in the air a moment, returned her to earth and kissed her lovely cheek. They stood holding hands, talking. They were gay; they were happy.

Doug Vaughan felt the familiar illness in the pit of his stomach. His hatred of Roberts, his love for Mary Snow mingled in a devil's broth within him. He writhed, his lean features convulsed in pain.

He turned away, demanding bitterly of himself why he had to take things the hard way. He steadied himself with a hand on the wall. He was a slender man, almost six feet tall, but light-boned. He was a center, the lightest center in the Conference. He was the Jammer, a steel rod of a young man, beloved of football fans and sports-writers because he jammed up plays no lightweight should be able to stop. He was the Jammer—and now he was acting like a high-school jellybean, and he was well aware of it.

He set his lips against the hard surface of his teeth and walked away from the window and down the hall toward the dressing-room. He entered the miasma of leather and wintergreen odor, loud talk, clashing cleats, creaking pads; it was serious today, with the Conference title hanging in the balance, and the Techs with their Ducky Roberts and Otto Miller and

Baldy Freda—and that husky, veteran line. Granny Grey, the old Eastern head coach, cocked an eye at Doug.

Doug went across to the rubbing-table. Granny was bending over Pat Kelley, the other varsity center. Big Pat's ankle was not so good today. It was puffy and discolored.

Granny said to Doug: "He can't see much action. You'll start—and finish."

"No," said Pat. His round red face showed his dismay. He was a fine big sensitive guy, game as buttons, Doug thought with a rush of feeling. "No, he can't do it against Tech. You know the Techs hate him. You know they threatened to murder him. That Roberts last year—"

"Whoa, Pat," said Doug gently. "It's just a football game, kid."

"Just a football game!" Pat sat up, staring. But Granny Grey was nodding and smiling, and the tautness had gone out of Doug, and they all grinned together. Doug said: "Who's scared? Besides me, that is?"

Pat said: "You fool, you! . . . I'll be in there behind you, kid. We'll be watching that dirty so-and-so—"

As a matter of fact, Ducky wasn't dirty, Doug thought, going to his locker. He took out the freshly laundered black jersey with its gold stripes, and stared at the number 65 on its back. He had worn 65 in high school, too—in his freshman year, when he had first bumped into Ducky Roberts.

IT had been a sunny day on the practice field down at Tech, the longest football trip that young Doug Vaughan had ever taken, to then. He was first-string center—Pat was slow and clumsy as a frosh, and Doug was better.

In high school Doug had not been smaller than other linesmen. He had somehow been a natural center, always. The idea of launching every play with the snap-back appealed to him; he was alert, quick and gifted with perfect timing sense. Passing was natural as paint to him—he could make blind passes into a back's hands almost from the beginning, and never miss a snap. The ball felt good in his hand, and he could work with the quarterback on T formation, or with anyone on single wing and punt

formation plays with equal ease. On defense he called signals, or he had the divination of the perfect backer-up. . . . He was the Jammer.

Ducky Roberts even as a frosh was a potential All America. He was big and swaggering and smart, a blocking quarterback who could triple-threat if need be. The Tech frosh had a whale of a line—Barrow, Opdyke, Friedman, Marlowe, Geary—all the boys who later became famed.

They headed up this sunny afternoon, and almost at once Ducky made himself known. He used Otto Miller, the bruising fullback, to punch out a first down, then handed-off to Frank Hill, the speed kid, and blocked a path to midfield.

They had bunted Doug out of the play. But he was quick, and he had seen the direction of the power, and cut the angle, getting between Tech and the goal. Ducky was leading Hill along at a merry clip. Doug came from the side.

He hit Roberts with one wiry shoulder. He hooked Hill's knee. He spun the astounded Roberts ten feet away and dropped Hill in his tracks.

Roberts came up roaring. Tech lined up—even Tech frosh had that driving spirit; and the play came at the line.

Doug had it figured. He got in there, jamming. Roberts hit him, but Doug kept his balance and fought to get at Miller. Roberts left his feet. Two hundred pounds of whale-bone and steel slapped Doug down. Ducky Roberts ground him into the dirt.

Nat Manning, the Eastern fullback, nailed Miller for only a two-yard gain. Roberts looked at Doug and sneered: "You're pretty good—for maybe ten minutes. Then we'll have you out of here."

Ten minutes later the freshman coach took Doug out. His lip was cut, and he was limping.

But Eastern had the ball on their thirty and Freddy Hagen was coolly sending his spinners and cut-backs through the big Tech line. Hagen, Bell, Horner, Manning made a fine Eastern backfield. They went all the way to the Tech fifteen before Pat Kelley made a bad center pass and they lost possession.

THE LIGHTEST CENTER IN THE CONFERENCE, HE SOMEHOW CONTRIVED TO JAM UP PLAYS NO LIGHTWEIGHT SHOULD BE EXPECTED TO STOP.

by
WILLIAM COX

Doug begged to be allowed back in. The doctor looked at his lip, and sent him to the lockers. They took two stitches where Roberts had clipped him with a hard elbow.

Tech won the game, 14 to 7.

Yet Roberts had not deliberately slugged him, and Doug knew it. Suffering, as he always suffered, at the defeat, at not getting into the game again, some underlying fairness made him admit that the blow which had caught him was a blind backhand stab at nothing in particular as he was throwing Ducky for a slight loss.

SOPHOMORE year they were on the Varsity. Doug lasted half the game. He weighed one-sixty, and he was wiry-tough. Roberts threw ten plays into the center of the line, and Doug jammed them. They fought like two bulldogs all over the field. Inevitably Doug was taken out, exhausted, and Tech won the ball game, 14 to 7. It was a horrible pattern repeating itself, even to the score.

That was the year they had the fraternal get-together after the game. The authorities wanted to keep the rivalry going—it was a sell-out game, very profitable. They were afraid it was getting out of hand, and in their wisdom decided that if the boys met at a jamboree they would not hate each other too much. Just enough—not too much, they hoped. They pitched a dance, and invited the local debs.

This was at home, of course, for Eastern; and Mary Snow was queen of that year's crop. Pat Kelley saw her first, and almost fell on his face. He was dancing with her when Doug Vaughan cut in.

She had a round, piquant face with a delicate brow line and high cheekbones, a small girl with dark skin and dark eyes and a full lower lip, and a smile like the gates of heaven. She said: "Hello, Jammer."

"Jammer?" He was holding her loosely, so he could stare down at her. They danced, scarcely moving their feet, examining one another.

"That's what they call you in the stands," she laughed. "The Jammer. How do you do it, such a skinny lad?"

"I was born under a caul," he said. "My father was a leprechaun."



"I don't like you, either," said Roberts cheerfully. "But I just wanted to say—good luck." "Why—er—you getting soft?" Doug asked.

She sobered. "It's a grand sight to see you go in there, fast and sure, and see the big men pile up."

"You must be a fan," he said. "Nobody sees line-work, except a fan."

"Oh, my father was Charley Snow," she said. "A good center, too."

"Charley Snow," he repeated reverently. "All-time All America, in many books. I'm honored to know his

daughter. What are you doing tomorrow night?"

"Dating you," she said. . . . "Father was killed in the war, you know—in Africa. . . . Mother and I live in town. You'll like my mother."

"It's as if I've known you always," he marveled. "As if I've always known you were so nice and so pretty too, if you'll pardon the expression."

That was when Ducky Roberts cut in. Right at that moment the big ugly-good-looking man dropped a hand like a steel clamp on Doug's shoulder and said: "Privilege of the enemy within the gates."

"Oh, no," groaned Doug. "Not you!"

"Hiya, kid? You all right?" asked Roberts solicitously. "Hadn't you oughta rest after the beatin' we gave you? Sit down and cool off."

Doug said: "And how is *your* knee, you baboon?"

Mary Snow said: "Please, gentlemen—watch your language."

"Nobody's using language—yet," said Ducky, grinning. "Go away, little man, and leave this houri to me."

Underneath was the enmity. The big man resenting the little man who could stand on his own feet and fight back. The small fellow detesting the arrogance of the large. They smiled at each other, but their eyes did not smile. Mary may have sensed it then; it is doubtful that she ever really knew how deep it was. Doug went away, still smiling, but seething within.

JUNIOR year—Percy Overly, that gentle lad with the dreamy smile, rose up from the freshman to play end for Eastern U. They kept him under cover for Tech; then Granny turned him loose, and Freddy Hagen threw passes to him. They tricked Tech that day. They won a thriller, 21 to 20—and Doug played thirty-eight minutes, jamming the Tech attack all up and down a torn field. That was a great day. . . .

They held another dance. Ducky, still cocky, flatly stating that Eastern was lucky, and next year they would cover Percy and then see what would happen, danced with Mary incessantly. He was openly courting her. And she liked it.

Even now Doug did not know how he stood with her. He knew how he felt about her—he had known that from the first instant. But she was gay, light, friendly. He could never make her serious for the time he needed. He was a young man of deep banked fires.

Ducky was loud, funny, extroverted, happy. He made Mary laugh as Doug had never heard her laugh. They made a handsome-looking couple, dancing, sipping punch together, or even just walking across the floor.

And later Mary went down to Dance Week at Tech. Ducky flew up a couple of times, and Doug saw them at the Tiger and other places. They were seniors now, Doug and Ducky. They were men—they had been in Service, and were scarcely college kids. . . .

Yet Mary gave Doug as many dates as he wanted. She was kind to him, almost loving in her thoughtfulness

and regard for him. He never wavered in his love for her. And now they were on the verge of the last battle, the two men, and the girl would sit and watch. If he only knew what she was thinking, Doug mourned, regarding the jersey with the number 65 on it.

Granny said gently: "Get dressed, Jammer." It was the last engagement, the end of college football for many of them, and Granny was sentimental and fine. "Get dressed, kid. It's almost time."

Doug put on his pads. He shook Mary out of his head, thinking of the movies of the Tech plays, wondering what new wrinkles Ducky would be pulling out there today. The two veteran teams would lock in a great battle, that was for sure. A victory apiece in Varsity competition—a freshman defeat to wipe out: it had to be a great fight.

The setting was the same, yet it was different. Doug's eyes kept wandering to the flapping banners atop the Stadium, flags which would never again look the same. He saw Tech men glancing across at him, and on their faces was the same distant look. They all felt it. This was the last affair.

Ducky Roberts came across the field as the warm-up ended. He called: "Hey—Jammer!"

Doug met the bold, hard eyes. "Hiya, Big Shot?"

"I don't like you, either," said Roberts cheerfully. "But I just wanted to say—good luck."

"Why—er—you getting soft?" Doug's fist clenched without intent.

"You'll see," promised Ducky Roberts. "If you live."

Doug searched the wide, bony face, the deep eyes. Then he said quietly: "I see. . . . Okay, Ducky." He nodded jerkily, and joined the team as it went off the field for the last conference.

HE was thoughtful when he came back to start the game. Pat Kelley limped to the bench. Hagen gathered the starters around him on the sideline. Doug listened to the words of Granny, warm, kindly words, nothing of exhortation in them for these proved veterans. But Doug's eyes were across the field where the Techs were ready to come out and fight. He turned for one look at the spot where he knew Mary sat. Then the players burst upon the barred field.

Tech had won the toss and was to receive. Doug lined up alongside the ball. Jack Prabosky did the kicking-off. Lefty Keegan was in at guard, and Obie Werner. Dick Craig was right tackle and Beast Boyle the end. Except for Percy Overly, it was the freshman starting team of four years ago, Doug realized. Again a wave of emotion swept him.

Prabosky booted it. The Techs formed to interfere. All the Easterns went down in waves, as was proper.

Doug was very swift afoot. He led the van. He sidestepped one blocker, saw that fleet Frank Hill had the ball. He decided on a course, and edged around toward the sideline.

Ducky came hurtling. Doug saw the big man, timed the block. He used a hand to spin Roberts aside. He used a shoulder, got by. He saw Hill coming, and dropped into the tackle, rolling Hill toward the sideline. He chuckled, marking the spot with his eye; he had managed to stop Hill on the Tech eighteen.

Roberts was up, bellowing for action, glaring at Doug. He was all fire and brimstone, but his brain was working beneath all the bombast, Doug knew. The Techs lined up deep with Hill in the slot. But Roberts threw Otto Miller, the squat giant, into the line.

Doug barked the defense signal, keeping his men in close. Miller came head down, like a small but powerful elephant. He butted through.

Doug, timing the play, leaped into the hole. He grabbed Miller by the knees, spun and gave Manning time to help. They pinned the Tech fullback at the line of scrimmage.

Roberts set it up again. This time he took it himself and threw his two hundred pounds at tackle on a short buck. It was slightly tricky, but Doug got over. Craig gave a little.

Doug took it from the side. He swarmed, all arms and legs, smothering Ducky's advance until Manning again bucked into it. Ducky got a meager two.

There was a bruise on Doug's face already. Ducky looked at it and laughed shortly. He went back and called the signal and booted the ball downfield, a beautiful kick which went beyond the fifty. You could not beat Ducky, Doug thought, trotting back. Cold as ice, he was also hot as a fire-cracker, tough as a leathery steak.

Still, midfield was a good place to start. Doug's tackle had put Tech in a small hole. Freddy Hagen was cool and collected, calling Eastern into the T formation.

Doug liked the T because he could squat with head erect, watching the Techs deploy; because he could pull out and help interfere after a blind snap-back to Hagen. He listened to the signal, right hand under the ball, left elbow on his knee. He saw Ducky, eyes squinted, poised to back up the Tech line, trying to diagnose the play. The sequence of numbers sounded on the bright air; Doug passed the ball.

He took the step back, pivoted. Then he realized something bad, watching Ducky. He hesitated, cut into the scrimmage line. He threw himself across Ducky's knees.

Ducky had been watching Doug. Ducky knew he would be in the blocking to his neck. Already Roberts had called the play, and Hill was stopped after a single yard gain.

Doug called time out. He said: "Count me out on those blocking assignments for a while, until we can cross up that damned guy."

"We could switch to short punt and try to pitch one to Percy," said Hagen.

"No. That's what they expect. We know that." Doug bent close and whispered: "If you can skip blocking assignments on Roberts, and leave him to me—can we do it?"

It was a veteran team. They thought it could be arranged. Hagen said it could. Doug said: "All right. I've got him when he backs up close. Otherwise, we run as we planned."

Time was called in. Roberts was wary, walking behind his line, looking for the point of strength where the play should go. Hagen called numbers. Doug snapped the ball.

Hagen swung, faking to Manning, to Horner. Percy went into the flat and yelled: "I've got it." Hagen faked a pass.

Roberts was still around, unfooled. Doug went through. He hit Roberts and kept contact. The big man slung

him, but Doug possessed a gluey quality which hampered the bigger man.

Hagen had unostentatiously tucked the ball under his arm. He came straight up over center. He slammed in behind Doug and veered right. Percy Overly threw a magnificent block on Baldy Freda. Hagen reversed, and picked up other blocking.

Doug set up Roberts with a hidden elbow, knee clamp. The big quarterback used bad language. Doug muttered: "You've done it to me a hundred times, son. Stop crying."

"You better send for Kelley," snapped Roberts. "You'll be washed up soon. You never lasted a full game yet, shrimp."

Hagen shot over the fifteen-yard line. On the ten, Hill made a shoe-string tackle to bring him down. Doug said happily: "I don't have to play full time to beat you bums. Get up and try and stop us now."

"You'll score over my dead body!"

"That'll be a pleasure," Doug assured him.

Roberts made a wild gesture and ran to rally his team. Doug placed the ball delicately where he wanted it and knelt above it, head high, eyes alert. Roberts, up close behind the line, was yelling at his men.

Hagen had the play. It was a quick-breaker, with Horner in motion right, and Bell flanking left. Hagen faked it pretty. Then he started to spin into the line himself.

Doug was right there. He saw Roberts hesitate and he yelled:

"Come on, Freddy—we got the sucker fooled!"

Roberts started to hurtle into the center where a mêlée went on. Hagen shovel-passed back to Manning, came on through, still faking.

THE big fullback had never passed in a game. But now he jumped, threw a little wabblor into the end zone. Percy Overly buttonhooked away from Hill. The ball fell into Percy's eager hands.

Prabosky kicked the goal to make it Eastern 7, Tech 0.

The look in the eyes of Ducky Roberts was almost frightening. Doug shrugged and turned away. He knew that feeling. He knew what it was to be fooled. He knew what it was to want to fight back. Now the Techs would be tough.

It was the last quarter. Doug Vaughan knew that. He had asked someone and had been told; it was the last period.

"Nobody's using language—yet," said Ducky, grinning. "Go away, little man and leave this houri to me."





He trusted no one but himself. He had to carry the leather.

The question was how to get into the holes quick enough. He could see them now. He was past thinking, although his hoarse voice called the signals for defensive play as soon as his brain registered the Tech pattern. . . .

But the amazing thing no one seemed to guess. The amazing thing that everyone knew was that Tech had not scored. The board still showed a big 7 for Eastern and a goose egg for Tech. That was plain, and more or less astounding. Everyone could see that.

They could not see the other, hidden thing. At first Doug Vaughan had not believed it. But now he could be almost sure. It was difficult to reason out, but its very simplicity should have worked.

The truth was: Tech did not have anything special. There was nothing in the bag, no great trick to score a touchdown.

Tech had its usual number of plays; leave it to Tech. But that big gimmick which usually came out in the pay-off game, where was it?

Doug knew the answer. He knew it in the pain of his bruises—he knew it in the ache of his bones. Tech had reverted to fundamentals. Knowing that Eastern expected tricks, Tech had fashioned a well-timed, powerful rushing attack mixed with a few passes to keep the line unsettled. It should have worked, with Pat hurt and Doug playing the entire game at center, weighing one hundred and seventy pounds in his senior year.

He felt Roberts staring at him. The ball was Tech's, on their own forty, first and ten. They had been down the field twice during the game, on sustained marches to the twenty and beyond. There they had been stopped.

Doug had not stopped them single-handed. No man could do that. But he had divined their plans and thrown himself into the path. He had called upon his sturdy, experienced teammates, and among them they had jammed the path to the goal-line.

Roberts wanted him out of there. From the beginning Roberts had harped on that. Several times he had sneered: "Where's Kelley? Where's your relief, little man?"

Doug rubbed a hand over his face. One eye was closing. A cleat had cut his cheek. He was limping a little now. The Techs had given it to him, all right.

Yet it had all been fair enough. No fist had slammed against him. No foot had slyly kicked him when no one looked. They had just played a lot of football around him that afternoon. He looked back at Roberts and grinned.

That was peculiar too. He never remembered smiling during a game. That was not his way. He was always

taut. Yet today, the last day he would wear that number 65, he could grin at Roberts, could dare him.

The big man did not respond in kind. He called a signal. The Techs deployed. Three backs handled the ball.

Standing behind the line, Doug counted. Then he fitted the jigsaw together and yelled his signal. Manning came over. Roberts slammed at the line, into a small hole. Manning and Doug went down and up, and pinched Roberts between them.

There was no gain for Tech.

Again Roberts lined them up, himself in the slot. Again the power unfolded. It was good; it was tough. It should have paid off. That it had not was a minor miracle.

Doug almost fell for it. Then something clicked in his relaxed brain. He yipped a number. He turned and left the amazed Manning, running toward his own goal.

Horner was slightly out of position. Hill was tincanning in the flat. Doug yelled at Horner and ran. The limp was more pronounced when he tried to sprint.

Roberts was feathering the ball. It was a perfect pass. It was nothing new, nothing startling. Tech had used it in other games, and all the Easterns knew it. But Roberts had patiently set it up, using almost an entire game to do so. Hill took it over his shoulder and ran. Doug, sobbing with exhaustion, ran harder.

He got Hill on the twenty. He tossed him and came up, staggering, waving his arms. They took time out, and he lay down and almost vomited. He put his head in his arms and did not listen to the others.

HE thought of Mary, then. He thought many things about Mary, and about Ducky Roberts and about himself. His mind was very clear in that moment of complete exhaustion.

After a while he could get up. A whistle blew, and Roberts was impatient, fiery, rallying his men. The Techs were weary too, Doug knew. Everyone was worn with that titanic struggle. And Roberts was using his brain as well as his brawn to pull out the game.

Tech used the single wing, for power. They came rolling, a juggernaut of big men, Roberts blocking, Hill carrying. Nothing could prevent a gain. Doug got under it and was trampled by a herd of runners with big feet. Hill gained six yards.

The banners had stopped flapping on their staffs. The day was clear, cold, bright. Doug looked at the sky, but there was no help in the little fleecy clouds, like lambs huddled, watching down.

Roberts chanted numbers. The Techs came with their power. Doug,

head up, ran to the tackle slot. Manning came in. Roberts was carrying. They crashed together.

Roberts gained three yards to the eleven, making it third and one. If they made this, nothing would prevent a touchdown.

You could never play for a tie, Doug thought harshly. Defeat could be faced. But a tie is frustration. He was trying to figure it. Would they plunge for it? They should—

He saw Roberts crouching to take the ball. The big man's powerful bare legs were ridged with muscle. Tech spread the line, and Hill shot out as the ball was snapped.

Yet Doug divined the play. He sent himself between the guards. He lengthened out his leap, sprawling. He went up and down. He landed on Roberts as the big man started the sneak for the yard.

Werner, the guard, pounced. Roberts was frozen a yard behind his line of scrimmage. Doug rolled over on his back and looked up at his enemy. He said: "Hiya, big guy?"

Roberts had new lines in his face. He did not answer. He turned his back and spat. The Techs gathered, wondering. Doug arose and went back to position.

Roberts called his signals. His voice was thick with rage, and something new that Doug had never heard in him. The Eastern men dug in, balancing like the wise veterans they were, poised. Doug waited, called the defense signals. . . .

Roberts had it. Fourth down, a yard to go. He had it, and Hill was flanking, then cutting in toward the Eastern goal-line. Doug swung and did not hesitate. He saw Roberts wait for blockers. He saw the big man spin and head for the weak side, retaining the ball. In the end, then, Ducky could not resist. He trusted no one but himself. He had to carry the leather. . . .

Werner nailed the blocker. Doug shot over. He got one arm around Roberts. He dragged both legs, clamping down. His grip was like a trap; but his weight, he knew was insufficient. He tried to get a calf hooked around Roberts. . . .

Manning came. Manning, who always backed up, came in and threw himself beneath the pair who struggled. Roberts went down.

Somewhere, in another land, a gun went off. Manning was helping Doug to his feet. Manning was saying something. . . . Freddy Hagen was racing in, his face haloed with a great light. . . . All the Easterns were grouping around Doug, pawing him. Someone said: "The old jammer stopped 'em dead! Sixty minutes he stopped 'em!"

Doug was looking at Roberts. He said thickly: "Well, I had the good luck you wished me. I didn't die."

Roberts was walking away. Doug shook his head. It wasn't right. Hell, it was all over now. Over for good, the last gun sounded. . . .

He went into the dressing-room. He couldn't think clearly for quite a while. Then he was happy with the others, happy above an underlying sweet sadness because it was all over.

AT the Victory Dance Mary said: "No. . . . We'll walk outside and sit down and talk a moment. Your leg—"

"I could dance on one leg with you," Doug said.

"You were great in there today," she said. "Mother kept repeating, 'He's just like Charley—just like him, in every play.'"

Doug said: "In it, but not stopping it. Hand it to Manning. And the rest of the line. And Percy faking them crazy when we had the ball. Give it to Freddy and Granny's coaching and—a lot of things."

"But mainly to you—figuring out Ducky's weakness."

He said: "What's that? What?"

"You knew Ducky—how he would take it on himself. Impatient of others, always believing in his own star above all others." Her voice was soft and slightly regretful, perhaps. "He'd be a great man if he could think of the others a little more."

"Well, I'll be damned," muttered Doug.

"Sir, your language!" she laughed.

"Scuse it, please. I was amazed."

"Yes sir?"

He held her close. He said: "Look, baby. I want to be right. . . . Look, baby—I was near to being that way myself. Today it all came clear. I could see where I was wrong, glooming around, thinking of me. Not thinking of you—nor of Ducky. He had a right to his chance with you, and you gave it to him."

She said: "Now you're talking, darling."

Doug said: "Poor Ducky—poor guy." He could actually feel sorry for the big man now.

SPORT SPURTS

SYRACUSE and Cornell have played twenty-four football games without any of them ever ending in a tie.

* * *

Gri Cashio, Alabama tackle, went with the Marines clear on past Iwo Jima without a scratch—then, as soon as he got out of the service, broke his leg in a practice football game.

* * *

In the first Rose Bowl game in 1902, Michigan used the same eleven men for every sixty minutes of the game, although it had brought four subs along.

—By Harold Helfer

MOA*

THIS WILD WEIRD ADVENTURE
AMONG THE TATTOOED CANNIBAL
MAORIS OF LITTLE-KNOWN NEW
ZEALAND OF 1791 COMES TO ITS
CLIMAX WITH THE ARRIVAL ON THE
SCENE OF THAT GIANT OF ALL BIRDS,
THE MOA.

by

Desmond Hall

DAVID BARD lay, breathing fast, in a couch of foamy green, so soft and light it might have been spun of spider silk. The back of one hand was crammed into his mouth to stay the rending gasps for air that otherwise could have betrayed him. He did not know how close the pursuit was; he did not know in fact if there was still a pursuit; but it was better that his lungs should burst in his chest than that the lithe mahogany men should find him and carry him away for their dreadful pleasure.

Of that he knew well enough, through the tales he had heard as the ship beat down across the Great South Sea. If at first the stories had seemed to him to be inspired by his youth and innocence—he was sixteen, and he had never been away from England before—he had come by the time the island raised on the horizon to credit them at least in part, though he would never have admitted it; indeed, it was to prove his skepticism and manliness that he had insisted this morning on being a member of the watering party, over the protests of his uncle. Therefore, was not the whole calamity his fault?—the ambush, the fight, and whatever horrors were now taking place back on the beach? Fool, fool, he thought, so anxious to demonstrate your courage that you had had to wander off by yourself, in order to be able to boast on your return that you had seen nothing to be afraid of and had



gone ahead on a lonely and casual tour of exploration!

Not the cool young hero of his fancy but a clumsy goat of a boy—a Judas goat; for one of the party (Fall, the gunner's mate, he thought it was) had noticed he was missing and shouted: "Where's young Bard?" They had all come looking for him and then had stumbled into the ambush. He had known in that moment of paralyzing scream and shriek how terribly true the stories were. On this island lived men with bodies like wood and with nightmare masks for faces; men who ate men.

David Bard felt something drop on his hand. When he blinked to clear his eyes he saw to his shame that it was a tear—a boy's tear. He felt for the claspknife in his belt and rolled

over in the bed of fern, to get up and face the savages, if they were there.

It was a green world in which he stood. The plants of fern grew in profusion and extraordinary variety, from the tiny gossamer feathers of leaves underfoot, into which he had thrown himself, to the massive fronds arching overhead, hardy and thick enough to hold a man's body as might a hammock, diluting the sunlight to a green shade. The shadow had a fluid quality, as if it were a seaside pool, but hushed and unmoving; there was no sound or sign of bird or insect, no sound even when he took a step toward the center of the glade, for his feet sank into the fern carpet as if into velvet. A dozen Indians (as all the men of the southern islands were called) could hide here and not



be seen. The fern tracery resembled in its intricate design the colored whorls cut into their barbaric faces. Perhaps, he thought, they cut and painted themselves in that way so they would seem to be part of the leaves in which they crouched in ambush.

He had the knife in his hand, and very feeble it felt. If only he had not disdained to take a musket! He was of good height and sturdy build—the months on shipboard had worked great changes in the slight pale youth who had left England; but what was a knife against the savages' knotted muscles and the weapons they used, the heavy war-clubs and long lances? As he ran toward the fern glade, he had seen out of the corner of his eye a man go down under one of those

clubs as if he were made of straw. His only hope was to get back to the ship; failing that, the only sensible purpose to which he might put the knife would be to plunge it into his breast in the instant before the Indians captured him. If he lacked the courage for it, he must remind himself of why they would wish to take him alive, the

scheme they would have in store for him: to be cast, bound and living and screaming, no doubt, into a pit of earth made red-hot by the coals burning beneath it.

The instant before. What instant? He had counted on hearing the gobbled lunatic sounds of their war scream before they rushed at him; but

* (It seems pretty certain that the moa—a tremendous flightless bird, resembling the ostrich but far bigger and more strongly built, the largest species of which, *Dinornis robustus*, was fourteen or sixteen feet in height—was alive in its native country of New Zealand in the Eighteenth Century. Two Maoris testified to it: Haumatangi, who was a boy when Captain Cook anchored offshore in

1769, told a governor of New Zealand in 1844 that as a young man he had seen a living moa; and Kawana Papai said that he had taken part in hunting moas and described the methods used to bring the great bird down. There is no record that a white man saw a moa, but if the last moa died about 1800, it could have happened. A new store of remains of the huge fowl has but recently been discovered.)



The white man was trussed up like a pig, his head dangling loose, flopping from side to side in ugly rhythm, giving him an appearance of grotesque life. . . . Who he was David could not see.

if they were hiding here, would they not rather wait in silence for him to pass and then reach their shining bare arms through the ferns to seize him from behind?

David shivered in the cool glade. He blinked his eyes again; again he felt the shameful moisture, and again was so disgusted that he threw caution away. He walked ahead boldly through the glade and climbed the far slope down which he had come in panicky flight.

Here, hidden by a fringe of fern, he stood on the crest of a hill that fell away to the beach and the sea. The ship was there. She was not a beautiful thing, a merchantman made over into His Majesty's service for this voyage, but she looked dear and lovely to him now: *H.M.S. Goodspeed*, ninety feet in length, two hundred tons in burden. She rode at anchor a quarter-mile from shore. The longboat swung at her side. Some of them at least had managed to get back; perhaps all of them—the cool young hero excepted. The beach was white and empty under the morning sun and he could see nothing at the scene of ambush, the clump of bushes to which he had unwittingly led them. Perhaps no one had been killed, after all; even the man he had seen fall might have been saved and brought back to the ship for the surgeon to look after. Surely they must now be preparing another shore party, newly armed, in stronger force, to come in search of him. He need only take off his shirt and wave it; a dozen pairs of eyes must be watching on the ship for a sign that he was alive.

There the swift new tide of hope and comfort reached full water and ebbed, more swiftly than it had risen.

Wave to the ship—and lead a new shore party into a new ambush?

What if the beach and fore-shore seemed to be deserted? They had looked equally barren earlier this morning. There was no proof that the savages were not waiting, cleverly hidden as before, sure that the white men would come back for the one who had run away.

He could not take the chance of leading them into a new and perhaps greater catastrophe. He had to get down to the beach unseen, if he possibly could, and run across it, stripping off his clothes as he ran, and into the water and strike out for the ship, trusting that the few strokes he had learned back at friendly Otaheite would carry him far enough to be picked up by the longboat; trusting that the Indians, if they were really here, would not overhaul him on the beach, or in the water—if they could swim. (And what swimmers the Indians at Otaheite were!)

Looking for the safest path to the beach, David found it in a ravine

some distance to the left of the hill. He ducked back into the ferns, and thinking of the coming scramble across the beach began to prepare himself for it and the dive into the sea, loosening the leather belt and pulling his shirt over his head. The lacy ferns slid over his bare shoulders like graceful tongues of green. He judged the distance with fair accuracy, for when he again looked out the ravine lay not far below him, a deep split between the hill slopes, winding inland as far as he could see, and shallowing out in rocks and pebbles into the beach. No one down there, he was sure, could be seen from the ship.

Ready to step forth into naked light, he cast a final cautious look around and drew in his breath for the run.

The breath stayed straining in his lungs and his heartbeat came pounding up in the wires of blood throughout his body, so that his head seemed to swim and the ravine to blur and sway, but not blur and sway enough to obscure the figures of men he saw retreating in the farthest fold of the hills inland.

He looked back at the ship. He could signal to it now in safety, and they could come in perfect safety to get him. But if he did so no one would ever know where the war party had gone with their captive.

THE *Goodspeed* had left England almost exactly twelve months before, on the seventeenth of January, 1791. David owed his presence aboard her to his uncle's powers of persuasion, which, eloquent though they were, had been tested to the limit before permission had been wrung from the boy's father and mother to let their only son go on the voyage. John Bard, the uncle, though scholarly enough (book-learning ran in the family), was of an adventurous cast of mind, with a strong self-reliant body; it had seemed to him that his nephew was being smothered into a namby-pamby creature, more girl than boy, afraid of the shadow of a tree, and that for his own good he must be shoved with a kick into the world, as the Indian women of the South Sea were said to toss their youngsters into a pool, to swim for dear life, and in the swimming learn what they were made of.

He had based his arguments, however, not on the virtues of muscle and manliness but on the great power of learning young David might absorb in the leafy schoolrooms of the marvelous islands, where every scene would teach him something new, enriching his mind and laying the base, perhaps, for some fine scholarly work to be written on his return. It was pure good fortune that offered this opportunity: that he, the uncle, should be chosen as botanist for the expedition, the first purpose of which

was to chart more accurately the lower islands of the South Sea.

The first weeks had almost killed the tender David; the gaunt Atlantic, the cockleshell ship, her close quarters damp and miserable and filled almost to bursting point with the complement she carried: forty men and a boy in her ninety feet of length and twenty-odd feet of beam. She was a wet hell, and ringing with the sounds of hell: shouts and curses and a good deal of drunkenness below decks, for if the food ration was scanty (and that little to David hardly edible), the allowance of spirits was not.

But he had survived, and the sun had come out, and coasting down the long sea breast of South America he had begun to take interest in the life of the ocean around him and in the sails and rigging of the ship, this incredible chip of wood that could live through seas half as high as she was long. By the time they came to the Horn he was ready for it and could run aloft on the dizzy masts with the best of them and not lose his dinner (now eaten gladly) as he swayed with sickening pendulum swing over the forest of foam and wave and spray.

Around into the fabled sea itself, they drifted from island to island. Were all the men who lived here, in these gardens on the other side of the world, so friendly? Not all. His uncle told him of other islands, where the whites had been killed. "But I suppose in most cases it was a matter of getting exactly what you asked for," he said. "We're not all saints, and if we behave like brutes, we shall be treated like brutes. On the islands we are to visit last, almost at the bottom of the world, there have been fights and killings, but Captain Cook and some others were treated well by the natives there. But then, Cook was a great man. I suppose it will all depend on who was there last before us, and what tribes we run into. If their last experience with whites was bad, then ours will be too."

BUT that was his uncle. Others had a different story.

"The Dutchies have been there—and so as you might expect they call it New Zealand, not giving credit where credit's due, for if right was right they'd call the perishing miserable country Cook, though I suppose it'd make the Captain whiz in his poor grave to think of his good name being used on that lousy bit of rock—and the Frenchies, and what I've heard from mates of mine as have talked with them, the Indians they grow there are a rare bloodthirsty lot. Bloodthirsty, my boy, and mark my words. They trim themselves up with their heathen tattooing to look like Old Nick himself, and do you know what they relish most for a nice tasty bit of

Illustrated by John Costigan, N. A.



The thing screamed again. It shook its huge body, and proved it was a bird, for there was a vast flapping of gigantic plumes

stew?" Here the speaker, the gunner's mate Fall, had extended one massive forefinger and with a sudden motion jabbed it into David's ribs. "You!"

He had scoffed at this.

"No?" said the gunner's mate. "You know better, eh? Then what do you think the poor skulls and bones found lying on their beaches was doing there?—with teeth-marks in 'em? Wild animals, I suppose you'd be telling me? Wild animals! I pity the poor wild animals running around near those blood-dripping savages! I doubt there's a wild animal left, with them ferocious heathens chasing them down and devouring 'em! And would wild animals explain the way some of them

poor bones looked? Do you expect wild animals took to cooking their food down there in this New Zealand? Burned, them bones were, charred at the edge; because why? Because the poor unfortunate owners of them was slung alive and screaming in a big pit and toasted to a turn on the hot coals, my boy, before being et!"

Fall had snapped his jaws shut, licked his lips and rolled his eyes.

"You stay right here on board, my boy," he said, "if any of us goes ashore, as go ashore we're bound to. Safest place for a nice tender young bit o' meat like you."

Not very likely, to be made game of by the two midshipmen—nineteen

and twenty, they were, respectively, giving themselves the airs of great seafaring men. David would not forget for a long time the falsetto voice in which it was the habit of the younger of the two to greet him when he came down to their mess.

A few weeks later the topmost peaks of these twin islands—a north island and a south, with a narrow strait between—lay on the misty horizon, seeming to float above the bosom of the sea like a long white cloud.

DAVID turned his back on the ship, the little floating part of home. Long before the time a new shore party could reach land, the distant line of



as it moved its useless wings.

warriors would be vanished, and their white captive as well.

It was no use to tell himself that that man, whoever he was, was almost certain to be dead; that even if he was not, it would require something in the nature of a miracle to rescue him; that in fact there would have to be a preliminary miracle to make it possible even to keep the Indians in sight, for they could travel over the easy paths they knew whereas he, in furtive pursuit, had to stay hidden, if he was not merely to throw his own life away after one very probably already lost. Where were the miracles to come from? The only miracles, his uncle, that hardy and rational man, had told

him over and over, are in your head and heart—and then it will take muscles to make them work. But none of these reflections served any purpose, because if he let the Indians and their captive disappear, his pride and honor would be gone with them.

He dropped his shirt to the ground, for the fabric might catch a flash of sun and draw the savages' eyes back to him. He must try to remember where he left it. It was a fine shirt, his very best, packed away carefully by his mother against any fancy occasion he might meet with in the South Sea. His uncle had smiled at him when he had appeared in it this morning and asked where he thought he was going, so splendidly dressed. To the shore, of course, he had answered, with the watering party. Then there had been the argument, which he had won.

This was the price of his winning.

THE noon sun was warm but not with the wet enervating heat of the tropics; the twin islands of New Zealand were in the temperate zone of the southern hemisphere, corresponding in a measure to the position of England and Ireland in the northern. It was hard to believe that the month was January, midwinter at home, on the other side of the world.

He had to stop to get his breath. The hill from which he had started had led into another and taller hill, and that into another, forming the sides of the winding cleft along which the Indians were traveling. The brush was not hard to get through but he had to keep himself half bent over for it to shelter him. The hills made a rolling shoulder along the coast; probably they fell away somewhere ahead into a valley. Beyond that would be other hills and other valleys, and it caught him suddenly with despair to realize that there might be a day's travel, or two days', or three, before the warriors reached their village, and long before that he would be bound to be lost in the wilderness, if not captured; and the ship would give him up and sail away. Even now could he be positive that he knew how to get back to her? The hills behind seemed to melt and blend together in the midday haze; he could no longer distinguish his starting point, and the last glimpse of the sea was gone.

He trembled, hesitating.

Almost certainly this was his last chance, the final choice between the mystery and terror of the hopeless pursuit ahead and the safety and eventual homecoming of the ship behind. Had he not done already all that could reasonably be done, and much more, to a point beyond reason? So that to go on would be only to pile idiocy on top of idiocy, a silly chase after miracles? Had anyone on the ship thought of coming this far? Not

they; not even his uncle; they had scampered back across the beach and fled. What were they up to on the ship, anyway? They had had all the time in the world to get new powder and shot and men and return in force. But there they stayed, shivering, leaving it up to him, the youngest and weakest, to attempt the rescue. He could face any of them with a clear conscience if he went back now.

David watched the sweat rolling over his tanned arm. He crooked his arm and rubbed it angrily against his face, but it did not relieve the catch in his throat.

While you are standing here crying over yourself, he thought, the Indians are going on, and there'll be no chance to get them in sight again. Is that why you're waiting and making up arguments? To make it useless once and for all?

He looked up at the slope of a new hill before him and bent over and ran for the crest, in search of miracles, beating his feet savagely against the earth as if it were an enemy that had come close to conquering him.

At the top of the hill he threw himself prone and lay gasping, hearing his heart thud into the ground. When he raised his head he was still breathing heavily, but what he saw got him to his feet.

He had thought the hills would lead down into a tight, close valley. Hardly a valley; this was a far-reaching plain, table-flat, glowing in the golden light, stretched out for mile upon mile like velvety green cloth until it merged into the purple shadows of a great range of mountains. Before his eyes was what must be the treasure of all the southern oceans, a rich and glorious land.

At length he remembered the Indians, and dropped to his knees, and in the same instant saw them. They had come out from the cleft between the hills and were moving around the lower slopes of the one on which he crouched. He lay flat again, wriggling forward for a better view. Within several minutes the whole party was exposed to him, and his young eyes could count them: twenty, thirty, forty—forty-two. Forty-three, with their captive. The white man was trussed up like a pig, his head dangling loose, flopping from side to side in ugly rhythm, giving him an appearance of grotesque life, as if he were slowly and wearily shaking his head against some disagreeable argument made by his captors. Who he was David could not see, but surely his head would not sway loosely like that if there were any life in him; the blow of the war club must have crushed his skull.

The Indians wore short kilt-like garments, resembling the wrappers

made of bark cloth that the natives of Otaheite used to clothe themselves. The majority of them were naked above the waist but the two or three who led the party wore a kind of quilted cloak that seemed to be woven of feathers. They were as big as the Indians at Otaheite but they were more solidly built, the muscles of their shoulders and arms and legs looked tougher, and their features had a sharper and cleaner line. They walked as if they owned the earth.

Now he should have gone back, for hadn't he assured himself that the white man was dead? But he did not. But this was not a reckless courage to be boasted of later. The most unlikely thing had happened while he stared at the warriors: his fear was gone, and in its place was something that to him, perhaps because he was, after all, sixteen, and still a boy, was far more powerful: curiosity.

HE itched to look closer at those wood-dark men in their feathers and bark and to know where they were going.

Since they walked as if they owned the earth, they did not trouble to look back. If they had, only once, they must certainly have seen him. His curiosity drove him with little regard for the proper cover of bush and rock and gulley and edged him closer and closer in short spurts of running until by the time they had come down off the last slope of hill to the brim of the great plain land, he could not have been more than three hundred feet behind the last of them.

The green carpet that from the hill had seemed so soft and velvety was made in fact—at least here, around a marshy stream—of a tall wild grass. Yet hardly grass; too big for any grass, unless the country grew grass for giants; thick coarse dark green blades, higher than a man and broad across as the palm of a man's hand. He thought for a while that the Indians' trail was taking them into this incredible grass, but they skirted the edge of the swamp. He was close to it when the cry of alarm rang harshly in the air.

He scrambled for cover and heard the rush of feet pounding on the earth. Curiosity died, bitterly regretted; fear came back. He remembered his knife and his earlier resolution and got it out and held it against his breast. The drum-beat on the earth was next to him and he waited for the shout of discovery, but the mass of men went streaming past him. When he dared to look out he saw them running off in the direction from which they had come, splitting as he watched into two groups that separated at a sharp angle.

And he saw another and an unbelievable thing.

A monster rose from the plain and fled in leaps of fantastic size, swallowing twenty feet of ground in a single gulp.

It was a bird. But it could not be a bird! There was never a bird born to grow to such awful size. No bird ever born could sprout legs like young trees, and a neck of the thickness and length of a python. And a bird flew, and this thing did not fly. A bird had wings to lift it into the air; and no wings, unless they were the size of mainsails, could float this thing above the earth. No bird could grow eyes the size of plates and a beak the size of an ax-handle. A true bird was in proper proportion, head and body and wings and legs all decently shaped, but this thing was in no proportion at all, with the vast neck and the huge pumping legs that were thick around as an oak tree at the top and eight feet long at least from the enormous claws to the body joints. Therefore it was not a bird, but if it was not a bird what was it?—for it had feathers, claws, legs, wings, and a crest of feathers cropping up from the top of its head; and it screamed with a sound of parrot anger, of ten tons of parrots screaming at once—but how could there be such a bird?

Bird or not a bird, legged snake or feathered giraffe, or mixture of snake and giraffe and bird, it ran with the speed of the wind and was gone around the edge of the hill, and the Indians after it. . . .

There was no such bird, and he had never seen it.

He crawled out of the giant grass; looked back on the path and saw the huddled form there, lying where the Indians had dropped it. David ran to him, and the man's eyes looked up from his bruised and bloody face.

"Davy," he whispered. "Oh, Davy! Run away—you must not be here."

His eyes closed. But he was alive; he had only fainted; he had to be alive. David cut the yellow grasslike thongs binding him. He remembered the stream, and ran to it and brought water cupped in his hands, and washed it over the bloody forehead.

"Uncle John," he said. "Uncle John!"

He put his arm under the man and lifted his shoulders, hugging him as if to press his own life and strength into the battered body. John Bard's lips moved under the gummy cake of dried blood; but the sounds he made, David could not understand. He let him down gently and got more water and tried to pour it between the lips. The eyes opened again.

"Davy? Is that you, Davy?"

"I'm here, Uncle John," he said. "I've come to get you."

"Where are they, Davy?"

"They ran off," he said, "after a—thing. A thing like a—perhaps it was

a miracle. We have to hurry. We have to find a place to hide, until the people come from the ship. Because they must be coming from the ship."

"I can't move, Davy," the man said. "Run away, Davy, there's a good boy."

"Put your arm around me," David said. "I must carry you."

He got his arms under him and lifted him, staggering drunkenly under the weight, the man's head flung back over his right shoulder, the feet dragging the ground. He carried him fifteen or twenty steps, reaching the stream, but there the drop of the bank toppled his balance over and they fell headlong into the water, the shock of the fall separating them. David scrambled up, dripping in water and mud, weeping at his clumsiness; but the sudden cold plunge had revived John Bard, and he crawled to his knees in the stream, and with the boy's arm around him lurched to his feet. Together they went reeling up on the far bank, sliding in the mud, plastered one against the other as much by mud as by their arms. From somewhere far ahead there was the same shrill unearthly scream.

"Mustn't go back," David gasped.

But where? Not in the grass. The Indians would think first to look in the grass, sure that their bound captive could not manage to struggle any farther. But perhaps they wouldn't come back, he thought with wild hope, perhaps that giraffe or snake or—thing would kill them.

But there wasn't any such thing.

THEY had to get up on the hill. No one so tightly bound as John Bard had been could ever climb a hill. The Indians would never think of looking on the hill.

They made a dismal shuffling progress, heaving and straining and falling, the man's breath groaning in his lungs. When they went down for the ninth or tenth time he lay as if the club that had smashed him down in the morning had struck him to the earth once more. It was beyond the boy's strength to haul him another step. They were pinned there by the struggling effort they had spent in climbing the slope as surely and hopelessly as flies mired in glue, only a quarter way up the breast of the hill and fairly exposed to anyone who chanced to look up from the level ground below.

David tore at the hill grass, ripping out handfuls and scattering it over the man, now unconscious again; it was the only disguise possible, and he remembered how the Indians had seemed to blend into the bushes of the ambush. He was wrenching desperately at a clump of it when he heard the scream again and for the first time thought to look down to the plain.

From here he could see a stretch that had been hidden below. The tufts of grass fluttered from his hand. The monstrous thing was there.

A lance shaft was spitted through its body, but it still stood erect. The Indians surrounded it like terriers around a boar. The impossible bird towered over them. They were big men, but the darting head when thrust forth to the full length of its neck was eight or ten feet higher than they. They seemed to be little brown puppets badgering a feathered giant. Two of the puppet figures were sprawled on the ground, but now another darted at their tremendous quarry, and the thing swung on its scaly legs, swiveling one clawed foot in a scythe of motion at him, and the tiny brown figure tumbled back, a red streak drawn suddenly like a magic necklace across his throat.

The thing screamed again. It shook its huge body, and it proved once and for all that it was a bird, for there was a vast flapping of gigantic plumes and a rattle like horny stalks clashed together as it moved its useless wings.

It reared up on one leg, the other held folded beneath its body. An Indian fainted at it, and the poised leg lashed out and cut the air and snapped back into striking position, while the head with its wicked pronged beak swung down on the snaky coil of neck. Another man darted in from behind, swinging his club at the single leg that supported the bird, and with a scream and thrashing of wings it toppled over. There was a flurry of shouts and tossing bodies and a windstorm of feathers; then somehow the great creature was up again and breaking loose, bursting through its attackers, striding across the plain, the Indians pelting after it.

David could not help himself; he ran to try to follow the fantastic chase to its end, but they were gone. On the plain there were only dust-wraiths and drifting feathers, and soon they had settled down, and it might all have been a dream. He was still staring, when the echo of a musket came sharply from the hills behind.

The rescue party had fired as a last signal, preliminary to turning back, despairing of finding either man or boy. When he went to them to lead them to his uncle, he learned that they had not seen the Indians. They believed in the existence of the Indians, of course, and they were even willing to believe that the Indians' attention had been distracted from their captive by the fortuitous appearance of some sort of bird or animal which they prized as game; but that the bird was a fowl of the size and fierceness that David described, no one on the ship would believe. Sweet though it was to be made much of, praised for his courage and hardihood, the fiasco on the beach forever forgotten, nevertheless it was at first inexpressibly annoying to see the look of tolerant amusement that came into the eyes of anyone he tried to convince that there was such a bird.

"Like that myself, when I was a youngster," the gunner's mate mused fondly. "Mermaids and two-headed men, and men with heads beneath their shoulders—wasn't nothing I

wouldn't say was prowling around somewhere in some perishing jungle or other. Though I must say I was never one to fancy fowls the size of ellyphants. For such he'd be, wouldn't he, this dainty bit of sparrow of yours?"

"You deserve all the credit in the world," the younger midshipman said warmly, in a voice that was far from falsetto, "but good Lord, my dear fellow, do you have to lay it on quite so thick?"

"They ran after something, no doubt about it, thank heaven," John Bard said; "and a bird that's lost the habit of flying may very well live in these islands—but sixteen feet tall? No, Davy. You were excited; you were seeing things three times their proper size; and God bless you, you had every reason for it."

AFTER a time he began to disbelieve it himself, and after not very much more time, on the sea-road back to England, it was put away in his mind as a rather shameful blot of overheated imagination on an otherwise quite creditable adventure.

Although never to the end of his life was David Bard to be quite free from the vision of a titanic fowl striding with Gulliver steps over the golden plain, and the shrill scream would ring again in his ears, and for minutes of dream he would be there again, at the ends of the earth, in the country of the Maoris—Aotearoa, the Long White Cloud.



Conversation With a Shade

What happened aboard the Japanese submarine I-9 when Admiral Bell's destroyer dropped depth charges.

by REAR ADMIRAL
FREDERICK J. BELL, U.S.N., Ret.

THIN yellow hands clasped tightly over his bony knees, Lieutenant Commander Suzuki, recently of the Imperial Japanese Navy, sat forward on the edge of his chair. On the sleeves of his shabby cotton tunic could be seen the marks of the two and a half stripes that he had worn in a Navy which no longer existed.

Suzuki himself no longer existed. He had been dead for three and a half years. I should know, for I had killed him on an August morning in 1942. Yet here he sat, blinking nervously and leaning forward to hear the questions that I was about to ask.

To one side sat Former Captain Shimidzu, a round, roly-poly man with a knowledge of English which he had mastered in large measure by an assiduous reading over a twenty-three-year period of the United States Naval Institute "Proceedings."

"Captain Shimidzu," I said, "ask Mr. Suzuki to tell me what happened aboard the Japanese submarine, the I-9, on August 25, 1942."

Shimidzu translated, and Suzuki nodded his small crew-cropped head vigorously and coughed a staccato "Ha!" followed by a deep indrawing of his breath.

"On the morning of the day of which you speak," Suzuki began, blinking his eyes like a startled rabbit, "the I-9 was on the surface proceeding at high speed to intercept one of your large carriers which we had sighted earlier. We were especially honored by having on board Vice-Admiral Yamasaki, Chief of the Japanese Submarine Service. We were anxious to do our best, that our deeds might shine in his eyes. Suddenly we saw an American destroyer very close and coming toward us at high speed. The Captain ordered an emergency crash dive, and we went down very fast."

The slender little Jap paused in his narrative and let his gaze drift out the window to the harbor where my destroyer squadron lay at anchor, a harbor that for years had been closed to all shipping save that of the Imperial Japanese Navy. While he collects his thoughts, it is as good a time as any to go back to that August day and fill in the happenings as we saw them aboard the destroyer *Grayson*.

If a one-word description could be used to define the condition of the officers and crew of the *Grayson*, it would be fatigue. The previous day, August 24, had given us our baptism of fire, when, in company with the *Enterprise*, the flagship of Rear Admiral Kinkaid's Task Force, we had been attacked by air groups from the *Shokaku* and *Zuikaku*, two carriers of a large force that was covering the efforts of Admiral Tanaka to reinforce the Japanese garrison on Guadalcanal.

In the early forenoon we received a reconnaissance report that at least one Japanese carrier was within three hundred miles—a stone's-throw as distances are measured in the Pacific, and as sea battles are waged in their opening phase. Our own planes took off at once, both from the *Enterprise* and from Admiral Fletcher's flagship the *Saratoga*. From fragments of information during the day, we gathered that one Japanese carrier had been sunk (later identified as the *Ryujo*) and that another (*Chitose*) had been damaged.

By late afternoon our airmen, having exhausted their ammunition and most of their fuel, were forced to return; and it was inevitable that they would be trailed by any Jap planes that could follow. Our Admiral signaled: "Prepare to repel air attack." We gathered close around our flat-top in readiness for action.

It came quickly enough, plummeting from fifteen thousand feet, one tiny silvery flash on the heels of another. Our guns started to speak, and a pattern of black mosaic from the AA bursts was laid against the sky.

In the *Grayson* we got a reasonably good bag—two mean-looking, slate-colored dive bombers with the red ball of Nippon painted on their wings, until they smacked into the ocean in flames of deeper intensity.

The *Enterprise*, that gallant and noble ship, did not escape injury. For a time her after portion was so enveloped in flame and smoke that it looked as if she might join the *Lexington* and *Yorktown* in the roster of missing carriers. Effective damage-control saved the day. She was still afloat and able to steam at moderate speed, but back to Pearl Harbor she would have to go, leaving us with one carrier, the *Saratoga*, to fight the Pacific War. But that is another story.

When the attacks were over, our Admiral spoke upon voice radio and directed the *Grayson* to proceed independently to the north toward the Japanese fleet, and seek out any of our airmen who might have been forced down through injury or lack of fuel.

We pulled clear of the Task Force with right rudder, and proceeded in the gathering twilight at twenty-eight knots. Our own fuel situation was serious, and I did a little mental finger-crossing and praying as I ordered a speed that would get us most quickly to the vicinity of our airmen, but at which the good *Grayson's* boilers devoured oil at an alarming rate.

None of our flyers had been forced down, but we sighted a dozen or so, either visually or on our radar screen, who were not sure of their floating airfield's present position, and who welcomed the sailing directions that we passed by flashing lights.

AT about midnight we reversed course. For the preceding hour we had had no contacts with our returning aviators, and it was increasingly obvious from the engineer officer's frequent reports that we would have to find ourselves an oil tanker before long or remain in an unhealthy part of the Coral Sea in an out-of-gas condition. Already she was much too light for comfort, and when we swung to our new course, she lay on her side and returned upright far too slowly for the captain's peace of mind.

Half a dozen of our men had been wounded the preceding afternoon, and I went below for a visit with them before returning to the hot little emergency cabin on the bridge.

All of us needed sleep as badly as the ship needed oil, but somehow sleep refused to come, and I tossed,

hot-eyed and sweat-soaked, in my narrow bunk, until I finally gave the whole thing up as a bad job and went into the comparative cheer of the charthouse for yet another cup of Navy coffee—the kind that is too weak unless the spoon bounces out.

DAWN broke on a day that would have brought joy to the heart of a California real-estate man. The sea was a smooth carpet of palest azure. The sun was kindly, and the air had a touch of refreshing coolness that is rarely met in the tropics.

All of our wounded were well enough to come out on deck and show off their bandages to envious shipmates. We hosed down the weather decks and cleared the ship of dirt, cork-fragments from powder cases, and the red stains that were so mindful of yesterday.

We needed oil, and we needed it now. We watched the radar screen with anxiety, and just in case, stationed extra lookouts to keep a careful search for the distinctive outline of our carrier. Aside from our worry about oil, we were enjoying ourselves thoroughly. We had come off rather well in the action; we had watched our own gun-crew give the "hot kimono" to some of Nippon's best dive-bomber pilots, and we were steaming alone instead of being under the ever-watchful eye of a Task Force Commander and having to conform to his every movement.

I was glad that we had stationed the extra look-outs. Our radar—a primitive enough affair in the early days of the war—apparently had a fit of the sulks for it failed to pick up the contact.

"Sail ho, one point forward of the starboard beam," came a shout from aloft. "Looks like a carrier," the lookout added.

I stepped to the pelorus, took a bearing, and raised my glasses. Sure enough, there was the familiar expanse of a deck broken in the middle by the large, ungainly shape of a carrier "island."

"Right standard rudder," I ordered the helmsman. "Steer for the carrier."

I raised my glasses for another look, saw nothing, and wiped my eyes with a dry hand. We were tired, certainly, but not that tired. I looked again. No carrier. The realization struck the officer of the deck at the same instant.

"Carrier, hell!" he shouted. "It's a damn' submarine!"

Instinctively we did the things you do on those occasions.

"All engines ahead flank."

"Go to general quarters."

"Pass the word 'all stations stand by for submarine attack.'"

"Set depth charges for attack plan Able."

We drove up rapidly, then slowed to a speed that would give the best operating conditions to our sonar

men, for they were to be the star performers in the play that was about to commence. Hour on hour for weeks on end they had sat in front of their sound machines, turning a little chrome-plated wheel, sending out electrical impulses into the depths of the ocean ahead, searching always for submarines.

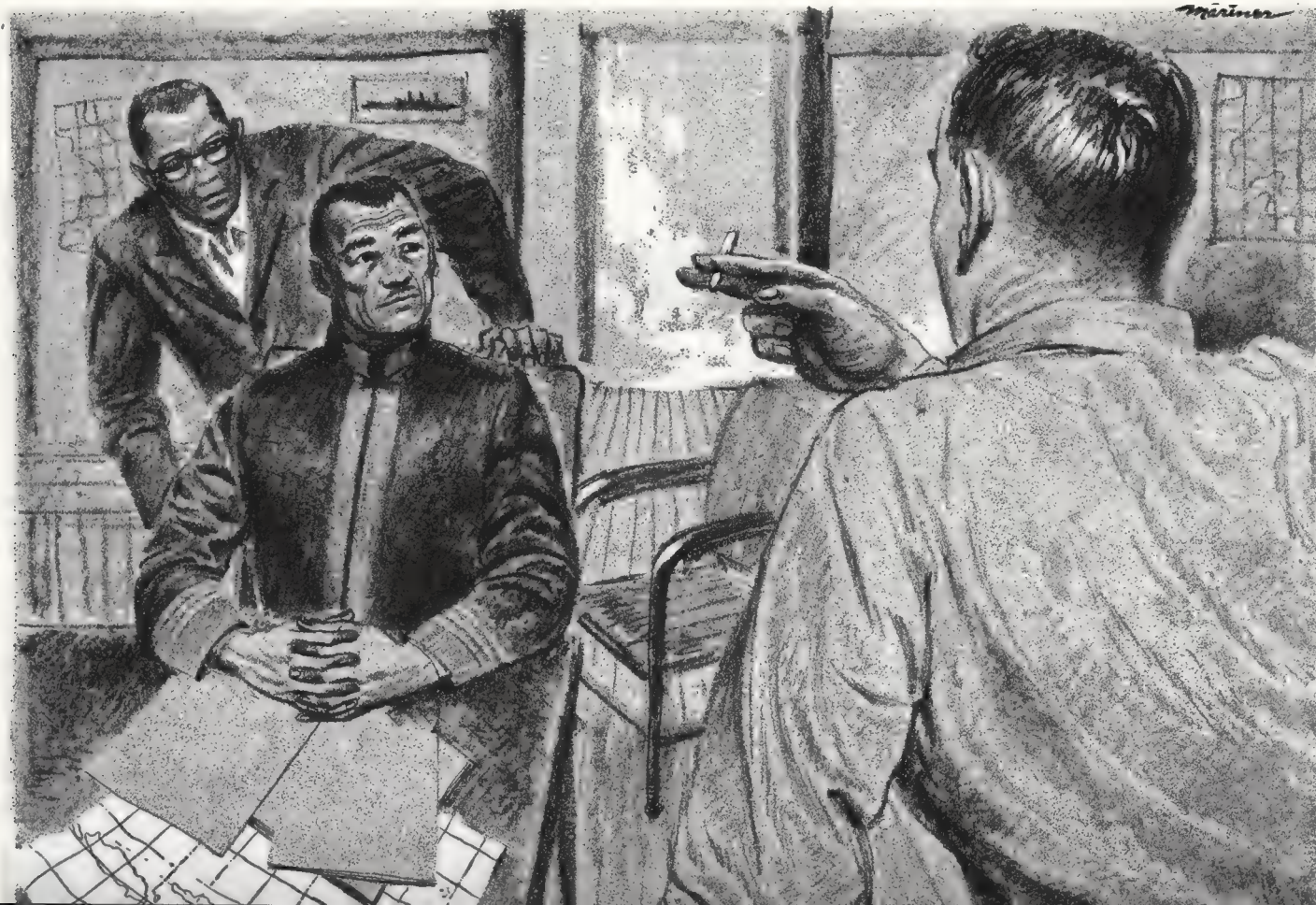
The sharp *ping*, repeated every few seconds, had become so much a part of our life around the charthouse and bridge that we noticed it no more than we did the interminable and comfortable tones of the sea passing by our sides and the winds singing through the rigging. But if ever the *ping* should come in a double note, showing that the second tone was the result of an echo as our beam bounced from the sides of a submerged object, that slight variation of noise would be as startling as the explosion of a sixteen-inch shell.

WE heard it now: *Ping—ping*. "Sound contact," reported the sonar men. "Bearing 358, drawing right." "Commence tracking."

The sound team went into action. The sonar men cranked their wheels. The sound officer, a recent college graduate who was on his first cruise at sea, leaned over his instruments, ready to prove that the weeks of instruction he had got back home were of practical value.

Gradually we crept up to the dropping point for our first attack, a point

"But haven't you forgotten one thing?" I asked. "What about Admiral Yamasaki? What happened to him?"



that must be chosen with great care, for even though our depth-charges pack a heavy wallop, so strong is a modern submarine that an ash-can, to be effective, must be put practically alongside the hull in order to knock him out.

I took my station in the door between the pilot-house and charthouse, within arm's-reach of the helmsman and the sound team. Rip Collins, one of my best signalmen, peered through the charthouse port watching for the signal to drop.

"A hundred yards to go," reported the sound officer.

"Fifty yards."

"Stand by," I ordered. Then; "Drop One."

The face of Collins disappeared as he threw the levers and pressed the buttons that dropped a heavy depth charge off the stern, and fired two smaller ones out to port and starboard from our throwers. A few seconds later he dropped another big one, completing the diamond shape of our first four charges.

"All ahead standard," I ordered, as we swung around to watch the results and take station for the second attack.

The ocean mushroomed up in four spots, and ominous circles of black water showed suddenly on the tranquil blue surface of the Coral Sea.

As we curved back, we held a quick post-mortem on the first attack.

"She's deep. I think those ash-cans were laid above her."

"I think she turned inside of us at the last minute. Don't believe we touched her."

All stations: "Starting the run."

To the sound team: "Make it a good one."

For this attack we set the depth charges to explode at maximum depth. A quick look at our book of Japanese Navy silhouettes convinced us that we were up against an I Class submarine, the largest type that the Nips had at that stage of the game. She could take a lot of punishment before she sank, and we figured we were just the ones who could give it to her.

The second attack was good, and at the end of the run our plotted computations convinced us that we had damaged the enemy.

The third attack was a flop. The sound echoes were mushy, instead of sharp and clear as they had been previously, and the tracking group continued to shake their heads as we neared the dropping point. There was no reason to waste depth charges if we weren't sure of our target.

"Dummy run," I ordered. "We will not drop on this run." Instead of dropping, we staggered our engine turns and went up to high speed to

increase the noise of our screws in the ears of the submerged enemy. This, at any rate, would not make him any happier.

Run Four was strictly from the training book. We got a fine echo, and the plot on our chart showed that we were on the proper course for a good interception, making due allowance for the movement of the sub during the time it would take for our depth charges to sink.

We laid an even pattern, and thought to ourselves: "By God, that's got him."

At about this time the voice radio cleared its throat, and the Task Force Commander, from miles away, informed us that he was sending two other destroyers to back us up and to take over the attack, so that we might close the tanker and receive our oil.

The oil we needed about as badly as a ship can and still have a few gallons sloshing around in the tanks to be converted into energy to turn the screws.

But we were in no mood to abandon our sub to a couple of other guys. We'd found him; we'd hurt him; and by golly, we were going to finish him.

Back aft, the torpedomen's mates were performing a Herculean task in whipping up depth charges from their stowage below the water-line, rolling them to the fantail, and hoisting them into the racks. How they did this in the short interval between runs I will never know. It was just another example of the impossibilities that men can accomplish in combat.

Throwing white water from their bows, our two sister ships rushed up to join in the kill.

"We have depth charges for one more attack," we informed them. "Please stay clear until we make it."

I patted the sound men on their backs. "Come on. This is our last chance. This has got to be the one."

We reached the dropping point and laid our last four eggs. As we turned, the ocean boiled up with gigantic air-bubbles, and a spontaneous cheer burst from the men of the *Grayson*.

Over the phone to main control I ordered the gunnery officer to point all guns on the bubbling area and stand by to commence firing the moment the sub appeared. Eagerly we waited, expecting each instant to see the black, dripping hull of our foe emerge from the ocean. But he didn't come up, and gradually the water subsided.

Impatiently the other two destroyers moved in. They could find no trace of the sub. The *Grayson* joined them, and three abreast, we worked over a square five miles to a side.

The Senior Destroyer captain spoke up to the *Grayson*: "You got him. It's your pig-boat. We'll stick

around for a while in case something floats up."

"Roger, and thank you," we responded, and swung away on a course to close the tanker.

From Task Force Commander to *Grayson*: "Well done for your day's operations."

We made a little bow over the radio, and nuzzled thirstily up to our tanker. On our bridge the sound team commenced a play-by-play discussion of the action, and we sent for the torpedomen's mates to give them the praise they had earned so well.

ALL of this had been three years before the end of the war. Immediately after VJ Day, I brought twelve new destroyers into Tokyo Bay and took over the duties of policing the waters of Japan. Soon after Christmas we were ordered to Kyushu, the southernmost island, to establish our base at Sasebo. As liaison officer, I was assigned Captain Tagami, a submarine officer of the ex-Japanese Navy, and a personable and intelligent man. When he first reported for duty, he spoke no English; but after two or three weeks, when he saw that he was being treated in a firm but reasonable manner, his wits returned, and he proved to speak English with ease and fluency.

One day I broke out a chart of the Solomon Islands and surrounding waters, fixed the position of the *Grayson's* submarine action, and asked if he knew the story of an attack that took place on that spot on August 25, 1942.

Tagami was not given to smiling. He was one of the few ex-officers who seemed to carry deep in his heart the frustration of defeat, but on this occasion he almost laughed aloud. "Ha! Ha!" he said in the abrupt staccato that we were so often to hear. "Verry famous attack. Verry well known in Japanese Navy. That submarine I-9. Vice-Admiral Yamasaki aboard. He Chief all Japanese Submarine Service."

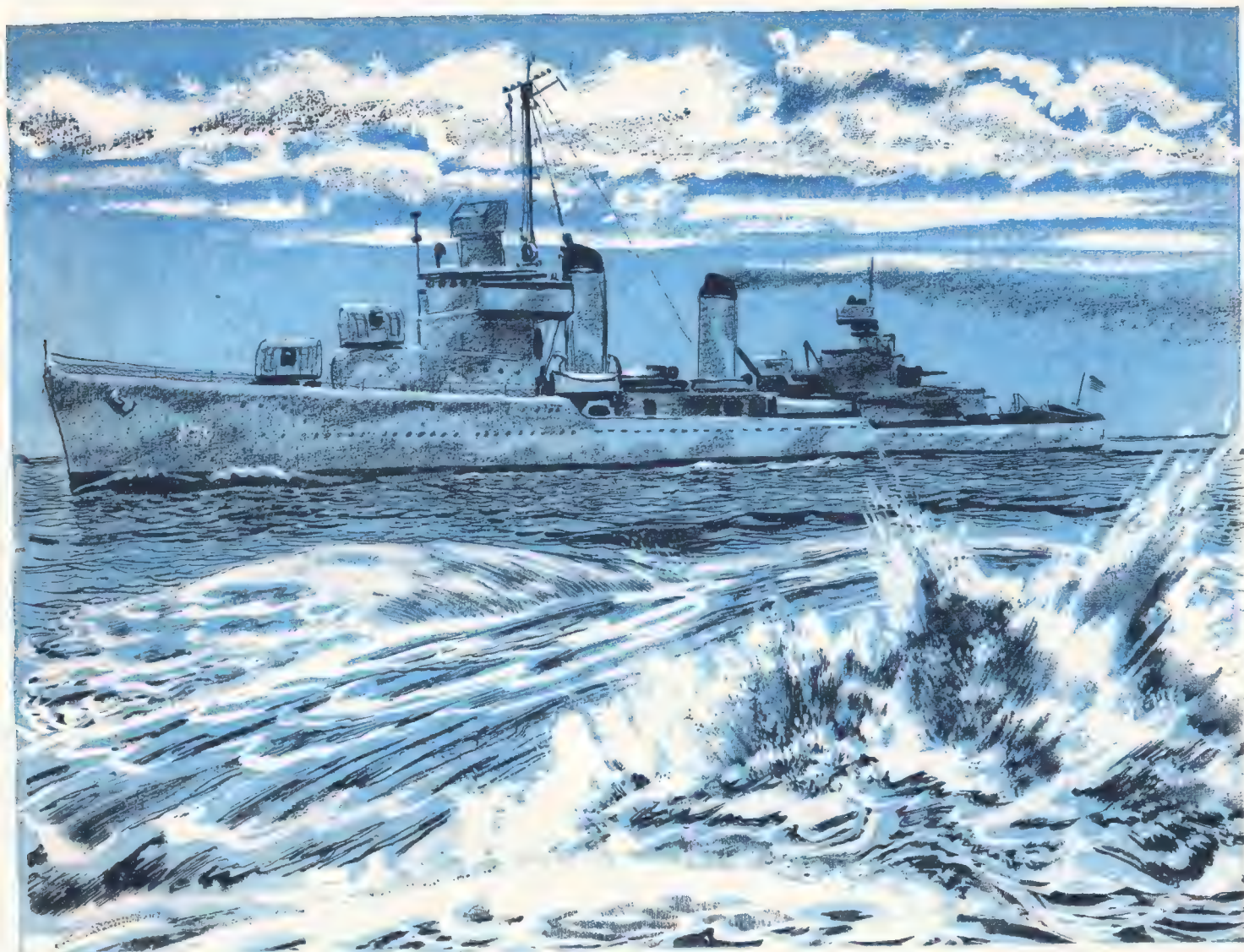
A thought struck him, and Tagami turned to me in quick excitement. "You talk Lieutenant Commander Suzuki. Live Sasebo. He Chief Engineer I-9."

"That's fine. You get hold of Suzuki and have him meet me at the Port Director's Office tomorrow afternoon at two o'clock."

Tagami gave a Japanese bow and sucked in his breath politely. "Think best Captain Shimidzu talk for you. He speak English more better."

It was so arranged, and on the following day I went ashore to talk with Lieutenant Commander Suzuki, whom we had killed more than three years earlier.

Suzuki coughed politely behind his hand, hissed sharply as he pulled in



As we turned, the ocean boiled up with gigantic air bubbles and a spontaneous cheer burst from the men.

his breath, delivered himself of a series of "Ha! Ha! Ha's!" and then swung into his story.

In recording it, I shall not try to inject the quaint vagaries of Captain Shimidzu's translation into English.

"The I-9, with Vice-Admiral Yamasaki aboard, had left Truk some weeks before her encounter with the *Grayson*. Early in August, American Marines had been landed at Guadalcanal in the first enemy offensive of the Pacific War.

"The I-9's mission was to reconnoiter the Coral Sea south of the Solomons, and to inflict such damage as possible upon enemy ships, especially those proceeding to reinforce enemy troops in the Guadalcanal area.

"It was well known, of course, that Admiral Tanaka was proceeding toward Guadalcanal with strong reinforcements that would wipe the island clear of United States Marines. To reinforce him, a large Task Force of carriers, battleships, cruisers and destroyers were at sea on courses that would let them cover further American advances from the south or east.

"On the afternoon of August 24, a great air battle took place which resulted in the sinking of one of our carriers (*Shokaku*) and the damaging of two others.

"Our aviators attacked the American fleet, and upon their return reported that they had sunk an *Enterprise*-class carrier and several smaller ships." (Note: This report was optimistic in the extreme, as is shown earlier.)

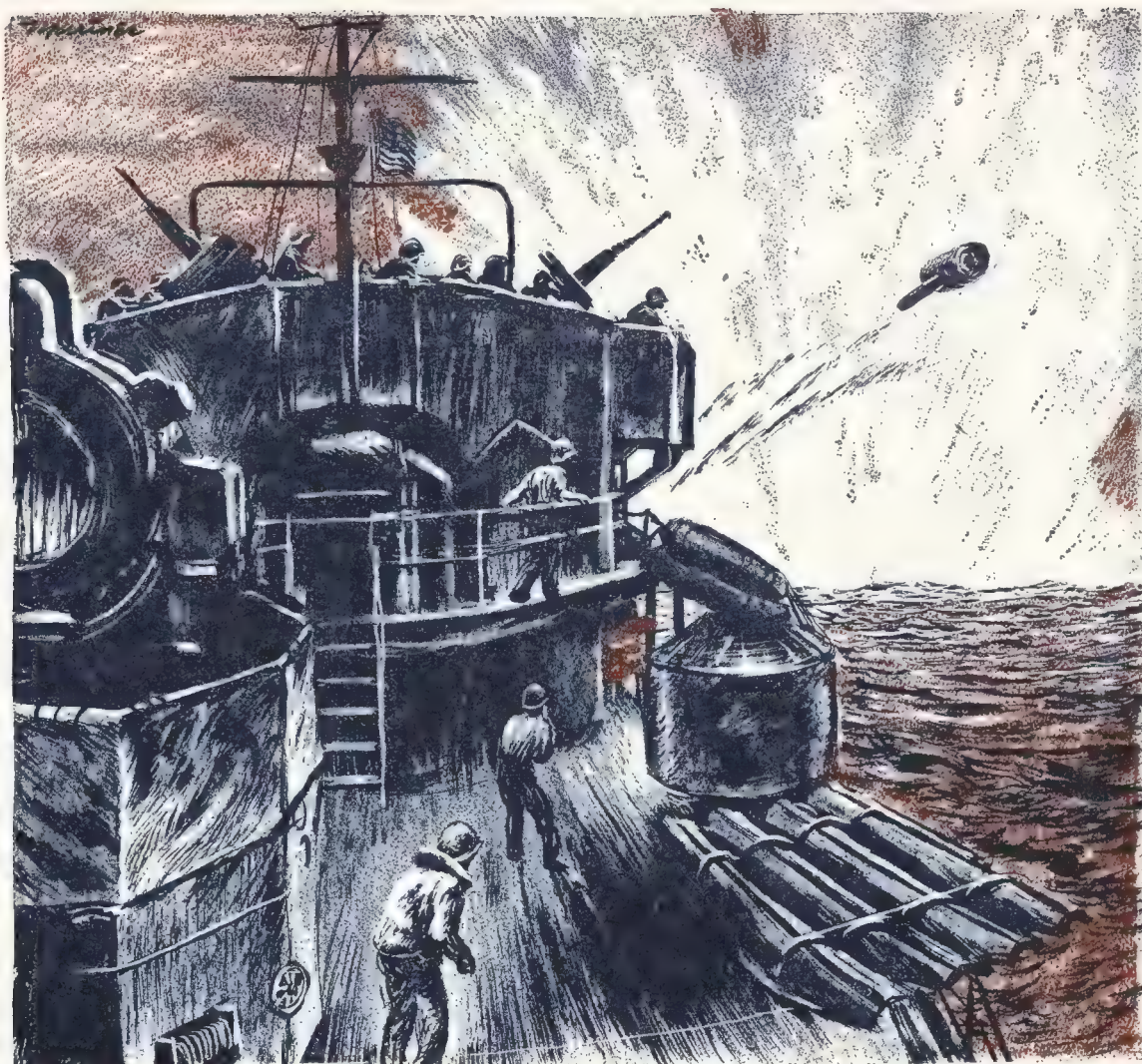
"THE following morning, August 25, we sighted a carrier of the *Saratoga*-class with other ships in company. In order to gain a position for firing torpedoes, which we could not do at slow speed, submerged, we came to the surface and went ahead at seventeen knots.

"Our lookouts were not alert, for shortly after eleven o'clock, we sighted an American destroyer only a few thousand yards from us, approaching at high speed. We submerged immediately in a crash dive, and continued down to a depth of three hundred feet.

"The first depth-charge attack was soon received. The I-9 was shaken from stem to stern. All of the lights went out, and except for a few hand torches, we had no light within the ship during the remainder of the engagement.

"The captain ordered a deeper dive, and we went down to four hundred feet. Even this was a slightly greater pressure than our hull had been designed to stand, but not nearly so much as we would experience later on.

"Through our listening equipment we could hear the propeller noise of the enemy destroyer as he closed us for his second attack. Just before he reached the position from which he would drop depth charges, the captain ordered a radical change of course in an effort to turn inside of our attacker. This may have helped, but the effect of the depth charges was more violent than before. Our diving planes were jammed and our batteries were ruptured. They began to give off gas fumes, and the air became very unpleasant.



*Illustrated
by Robert
Mariner*

We laid an even pattern and thought to ourselves: "By God, that's got him!"

"The enemy came in again, while we worked manfully to regain control of the diving planes. This time he did not drop any depth charges, and we were glad.

"THE enemy's fourth attack was more violent than any of the others. We received damage to the pressure hull, and water commenced to enter in many compartments. The bow took a downward lurch, and before control could be regained, we had plunged to six hundred feet, nearly twice the depth for which we were designed. We blew some of our ballast tanks, and the effect was more than we expected for we commenced to rise toward the surface. The captain tried in every way to keep us down, but we shot upward out of control, and were almost on the surface before our progress was stopped.

"By this time everyone showed on their faces that they were ready to die for the Emperor. Again the enemy came in, and we heard the roaring noise of his propellers before we were buffeted from side to side by depth-charge explosions. The ship went completely out of control. The bow would shoot up at an angle of 30 degrees and then down at the same

angle below the horizontal. The captain passed the word through the ship to prepare to blow ourselves up if our motions became more erratic.

"Then, just as we had given up all hope, the attack ceased, and although we heard the propellers of several ships passing over us, there were no more explosions."

(Note: The only way that I can explain why we lost contact with the I-9 following the *Grayson's* fifth attack is that the sub must have got beneath a thermal layer which caused our sound beams to give off a mushy note. Previous to this attack, as I have noted earlier, sound conditions were the best I had ever seen.)

"That night, after dark, we blew our tanks and managed to come to the surface. Our superstructure around the conning tower was battered and torn. From our deck we filled three large baskets with depth-charge fragments. We headed for Truk on the surface, the captain not wishing to risk submerging.

"After several days, we arrived safely, but were told that our damage was too great for local repair, and that we must return to Japan. This we did, remaining on the surface, and with a cruiser to escort and protect us.

"We arrived at Kure, and were under repair the next three months."

Lieutenant Commander Suzuki ceased his narrative, sighed, drew in his breath, exploded in one final "Ha!" and added a few words to Shimidzu, the interpreter. Shimidzu had become so overcome by Suzuki's matter-of-fact post-mortem that he so far forgot himself as to change his l's into r's in the manner of most Japanese when speaking English.

"Oh, Captain Berru, that verry bad attack. Think I-9 verry rucky. Verry rucky vesser."

I nodded: "A little too rucky. We thought we'd sunk her.

"But haven't you forgotten one thing?" I asked. "What about Admiral Yamasaki? What happened to him?"

Shimidzu put the question to Suzuki, whose face developed the brick-red hue that is characteristic of Japanese when under great emotion.

"Admiral Yamasaki made verry ill by your attack. When we reached Truk, Admiral Yamasaki go ashore. Never go to sea again during the war."

So that was the story of the I-9 as told by her Chief Engineer, who, according to my records, had for three years been a corpse entombed within

the steel walls of a Japanese submarine on the Coral Sea bottom.

We were wrong, as I had just learned this afternoon. We had not destroyed our opponent (later she was sunk in the Aleutians by an American P-C boat), but we had damaged her so severely that she had been out of action for more than three months, and even more important, we had driven home so strong a lesson to a Japanese vice-admiral that he eschewed the sea during his country's greatest war. I am convinced that in many ways the Admiral's action was of greater benefit to the American cause than if he had died on the day of our attack, for he went home a chastened, frightened man, and it is not unreasonable to assume that his own attitude of mind was injected into the minds of other senior officers with whom he came in contact. So perhaps we did a better job that afternoon than if we had sent the *I-9* to a final resting-place.

Seeking further corroboration of Lieutenant Commander Suzuki's narrative, I requested our Naval Headquarters at Tokyo to find Vice-Admiral Yamasaki and get his account. The Admiral's reply, which I now have, together with the translation by our staff at Tokyo, was in agreement in the main facts with Suzuki's story. It goes without saying that Yamasaki made no mention of the details of each depth-charge attack, nor of the mental state in which he was left when the *I-9* crept to the surface under cover of darkness.

I believe that my interview with Suzuki and the verification by Yamasaki are unique in the annals of the Pacific War, for I do not know of any other instance when an American officer had an opportunity for a face-to-face discussion with one of the enemy, regarding an encounter so highly personalized as a single-ship action between destroyer and submarine.

LATER, in the spring of 1946, I had my final, and by all odds most enjoyable encounter with the submarines of Nippon. There were thirty of them in the harbor of Sasebo, each with a skeleton crew of Nips on board. We were ordered to escort them to sea and sink them by demolition charges.

When the news reached the Japs, they reacted with the reverse characteristics that puzzled us so often. Since the surrender they had taken no pains to keep their ships at the proper standard of cleanliness. Now, when they learned that the ships were to be destroyed, they turned to with a will with soap, water and bright-work polish, until the subs glistened, within, as if prepared for inspection by the Emperor himself.

On a cool, quiet morning they were escorted to sea by two cruisers, two

of my destroyers, an American submarine tender and smaller craft.

From the top of every periscope waved great bunches of cherry blossoms plucked from the trees that made the hills around Sasebo a mass of pink and purple.

To anyone with a knowledge of Japanese flower symbolism, it was an interesting manifestation. Cherry blossoms stand for bravery, plum blossoms for fortitude. There were no plum blossoms at the periscopes of our recent enemy.

In two long lines the ships cleared the narrow entrance and steadied on a course for the burial ground beyond the one-hundred-fathom curve. Most of the thirty were large ships. A few of them towed midget subs alongside. There was one monster, the *I-400*, a five thousand-ton craft with a hangar intended to carry five aircraft. Possessing an enormous cruising radius, she and the sisters of her class, with their aircraft, were designed to bomb the locks at Panama, a purpose that was never fulfilled, for her great stowage spaces were needed for transporting troops and supplies to beleaguered garrisons in more and more islands of the South Pacific as our Navy moved toward Tokyo.

Arriving in deep water, the procession was brought to a stop. Naval demolition crews boarded the subs one by one, took off the Japs, and lighted the fifteen-minute fuse which terminated in a charge of high explosives.

For the next two hours we were treated to the view of ships sinking in

every imaginable way. Some remained in a horizontal position as they sank slowly beneath the surface; some went down by the bow or stern; others gave spectacular leaps, and standing on their noses, plunged vertically to the bottom.

One of them, the *I-58*, held a special significance for me, for it was she who sank the *Indianapolis* in the closing days of the war, and that outstandingly efficient cruiser had been the flagship of Vice-Admiral Andrews, to whom I had served as flag lieutenant from 1938 until early 1941.

FINALLY there remained only the big fellow, the *I-400*. Our Admiral signaled over to ask if I would like to sink her—the largest submarine in the world—with destroyer gunfire—a question equivalent to asking a mongoose if he would be interested in taking on a cobra; for like this fierce little animal and a serpent, the destroyer and submarine are natural enemies.

The *Goodrich* formed astern of the *Larson*, in which I was embarked, and we stood toward the massive sub that was the sole remaining symbol of Japan's great Navy.

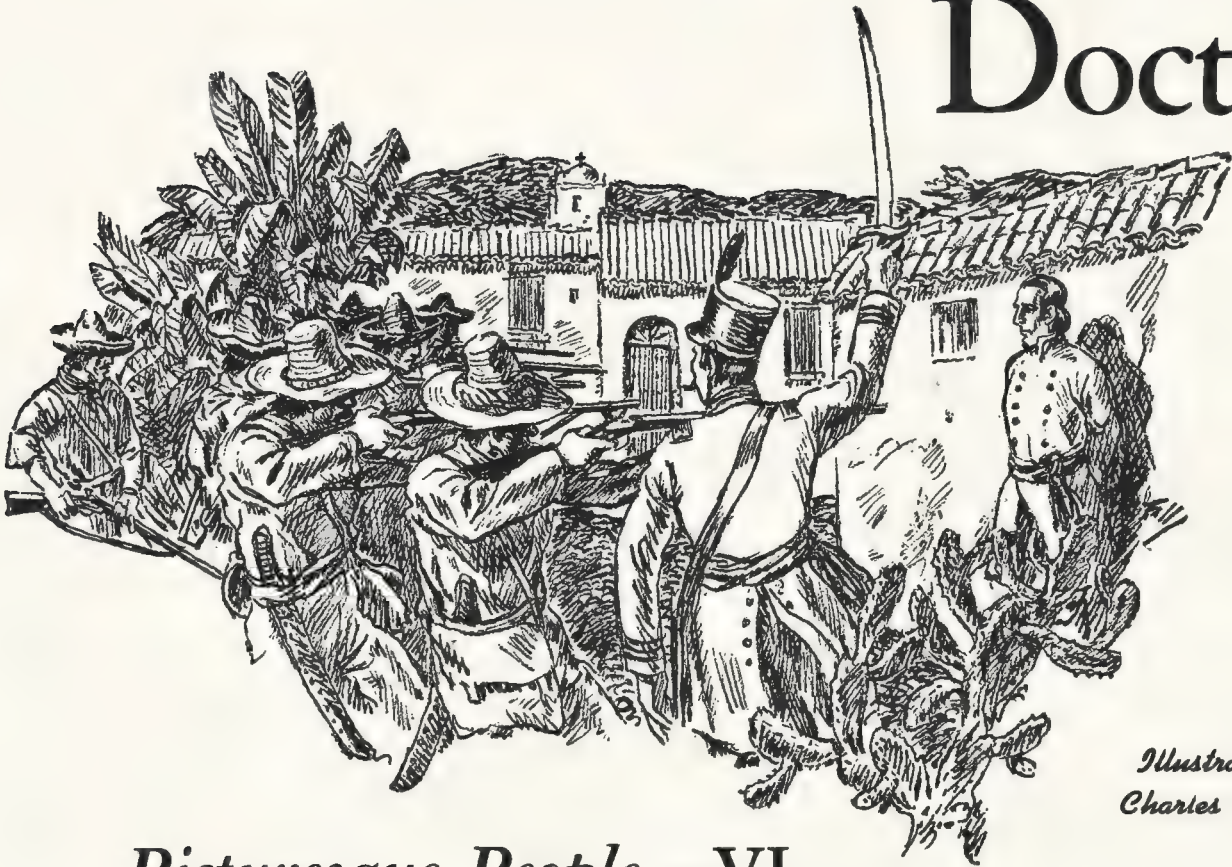
Thinking back on those early grim days of 1942 and 1943, it was with particular relish that I ordered: "Commence firing." Ninety seconds later the *I-400* was on the bottom—to stay.

As we swung around to take our station, the Admiral signaled: "Nice shooting."

"Thank you," I replied. "It was a pleasure." And it most certainly was.



Doctor,



Illustrated by
Charles B. Falls

Picturesque People—VI

WILLIAM WALKER HAD GREAT COURAGE, GREAT TALENTS,
AND A VAINGLORIOUS AMBITION THAT DESTROYED HIM.

by EDWIN SIMMONS

THE squad of soldiers, not very military in their cotton trousers and bare feet, raised their muskets at the *teniente's* command. The volley was ragged; most of the bullets went wide and cut fresh white scars in the execution wall, but some crashed into the slight figure of the man to be executed. His slender body bent at the knees and tumbled forward.

The Honduran lieutenant walked hesitantly toward the crumpled figure. This dying man was *el ultimo filibustero*, El Walker himself. The curious gray eyes were dull now, like flat pieces of slate. The *teniente's* pistol banged.

So died William Walker, the strange sallow-faced little man who thought he could make Central America into a strong military empire. Pursuing this illusion, he was many things: doctor, lawyer, editor, soldier and finally—dictator of Nicaragua. So close did he come to fulfilling his dream, that his name is still remembered with a curse in Central America. In Costa Rica there is a monument in memory of his destruction.

Filibustering in the middle 1800's was both a sport and a profession. It

promised loot, fame and adventure. A successful filibuster could become a great patriot—Sam Houston in Texas and John Fremont in California. There were many filibusters—but of them all, William Walker was the ultimate.

He first attracted national attention in 1853. A "Colonel" by self-appointment, he had embarked from San Francisco in a leaky brig named the *Carolina* with a "First Independence Battalion" consisting of forty-five men recruited from the worst of California gold camps had to offer. He was off to conquer the northern states of Mexico—Sonora, to be specific.

He sailed around the tip of Lower California and landed at La Paz, the peninsula's sleepy capital. Resistance lasted less than thirty minutes; then the self-styled Colonel became the self-named President of the newly-created "Republic of Lower California." His new government flourished briefly. His army grew to three hundred. He moved north, annexed Sonora by proclamation.

But in the end he was beaten. Not in pitched battle by a proper enemy, but by the harsh terrain and the in-

visible Indians who ambushed and harassed but never stood and fought. The recruits who had rushed to join his flag melted away in desertions, deaths, sick and wounded. Always there were losses and more losses. Walker did what he could as a surgeon; his bowie knife was a scalpel and probe for musket balls; a heated ramrod served to cauterize arrow wounds. Finally, after an incredible march northward, Walker stood with the shreds of his command on the U. S. border.

Blocking his way to San Diego and safety was the well-armed cavalry of General Melandrez, himself half a soldier, half a bandit, who had been sent by the Mexican Government to catch the American brigand Walker. This, one would have thought, was the end.

But the seventeen threadbare scarecrows with Walker were the triple distilled essence of fighting men. The little column shambled forward at a dog-trot. From their lips came a high wavering yell. Rifles and revolvers banged. Men tumbled from their saddles. Melandrez's startled line split into two disordered columns which galloped off into the desert.

With something of a swagger the Americans marched across the border. Walker, managing great dignity despite his broken boots, surrendered his company to the commandant of the U. S. Army post at San Diego. It was his thirtieth birthday.

Lawyer and Filibuster

His hectic career had begun, uneventfully enough, on May 8, 1824, in Nashville, Tennessee, where he was born the oldest of four children. His father, James Walker, a solid and respectable Scottish banker, planned that his son should enter the ministry. But the shy and undersized William, not quite certain of what he wanted, decided on medicine.

Graduating from the University of Nashville at fourteen, he went to the University of Pennsylvania to take his M.D. This he did after five years' study. Then came a year in Europe; time spent in a Paris which nostalgically remembered Napoleon, and in a Germany which was uniting under Prussian banners.

Young Dr. Walker returned home. Life in Nashville was dull and provincial after the heady atmosphere of the Continent. He stuck it out for a while—long enough to be called the most promising young surgeon in the city; then he departed abruptly for New Orleans, the most cosmopolitan of American cities. Through with medicine, he became interested in the Code Napoleon, studied law, and in two years was admitted to the bar. Clients were scarce, or perhaps the practice of law was less exciting than he had anticipated. Anyway, his career as a lawyer was a short one. Deciding to try journalism, he became editor and one of the owners of the *Daily Crescent*.

He met a girl—Helen Martin. She was deaf. This struck some chord of tenderness in him. He learned sign language, wooed and won her. Here his long, restless trail might have happily ended, but one of New Orleans' periodic epidemics of yellow fever swept the city and carried off his betrothed. If William Walker ever loved again, there is no record of it.

Without further tie, and hating New Orleans for its memories, he joined the human torrent moving westward. The year was 1849, and gold had been discovered in California. There were both politics and newspapers in the new West. Walker figured on profitably combining the two. He settled in San Francisco and later in Marysville. There some of the booted and burly citizens were inclined to laugh at the sad-faced young ink-slinger who dressed like an undertaker's helper. But there was one of Mr. Colt's excellent revolvers under

the skirts of Walker's long frock coat, and he wasn't averse to using it. He began to get a reputation and that led to the Sonora affair.

Afterward there was a farce of a trial in San Francisco—Walker had violated the Neutrality Act of 1824. The whole thing turned out to be more of a reception than a court of law, and the jury acquitted him after eight minutes' deliberation. Colonel Walker—the title had stuck—returned to Marysville. But not for long.

Certain gentlemen of tarnished scruples had use for Walker's peculiar talents. There was a revolution in Nicaragua—a chronic condition which had lasted since Nicaragua won her independence from Spain thirty-four years before. It was being fought between the Legitimists—called the *calzados*, those who wore shoes—and the Democrats—the people's party. Actu-

ally, the chief difference was that the Legitimists wore white ribbons and the Democrats were distinguished by red. A "colonizing" contract was offered, and Walker was convinced that he should organize an expedition to help the Democrats.

There were difficulties, the chief of which was a shortage of cash. Nevertheless, Walker managed to charter an unseaworthy old tub, the *Vesta*, and recruit a company. He also found time to fight a duel and get shot through the heel. Before the *Vesta* could raise her hook, a sheriff's deputy came aboard with an attachment for debt. But the *Vesta* sailed anyway—with the deputy locked in her cabin.

This time Walker had fifty-eight followers—rather fatuously they had styled themselves the "Immortals." Some had been with him in Lower California; others had served creditably in the Mexican War; but for the most part they were the scum of California.



William learned sign language, wooed and won her.

It was a long five-week trip, with rough weather threatening to spring the creaking old timbers of the brig; but finally, after nosing down the coast of Nicaragua, the *Vesta* on June 16, 1855, anchored in the harbor of Realejo.

The Immortals were met by a detachment of the *Ejercito Democratico*. They marched, fought battles, won victories. The Indian conscripts opposing them were no match for the bearded, whisky-drinking, sharp-shoot-*ing falanginos* from the North.

Nor were the Nicaraguan *politicos* able to control the lank-haired chieftain of the hired killers. In short order Walker effected a compromise peace, allowed himself to be named General in Chief of the combined armies. Then on June 27, 1856—hardly more than a year after his landing—Walker held an election and had himself named president. *Dictator* would have been a more appropriate title.

BACK in the United States, Walker's adventures had made him something of a popular hero. His recruiters did big business in San Francisco, New Orleans and New York. At his peak he could count twelve hundred Americans serving under his flag.

It is a little hard to account for Walker's success as a leader. He was physically unimpressive, and this was an age when physical prowess was all-important. He made no friends, yet he inspired loyalty. His personal courage was unquestioned. Cold and unimpassioned, he was at heart a sentimentalist. Denounced by his enemies as a tyrant, he showed a clemency unusual for a Central American leader.

He planned great things for Nicaragua. He would unite the brawling, ineffectual republics of Central America into a single military power. He would ally himself with Louis Napoleon of France. He would reintroduce African slavery, and rebuild the country's lagging agriculture.

For a while it looked as though Walker might succeed in his grandiose schemes. The U. S. minister to Nicaragua, John H. Wheeler—as inept a public servant as ever served the American cause abroad—was hoodwinked into recognition of the Walker régime. Ministers were sent to Washington and London. Louis Napoleon was known to be thinking favorably of a trans-Nicaraguan canal. It appeared as though there was no force in Central America that could withstand the impact of Walker's filibusters. But the seeds of Walker's destruction were already sown.

There was one property in all of Nicaragua which was of international value: except for thirteen miles of land, there existed a water route across the Central American isthmus. This priceless link with the West was controlled by the Accessory Transit Company. Passengers were landed at Greytown on the east coast of Nicaragua. From there by steamer they ascended the San Juan river and crossed Lake Nicaragua. From the far bank of the lake to the west coast port of San Juan del Sur was an excellent macadam highway—the only one in Nicaragua—called the Transit Road.

This Transit Road had been the axis of Walker's campaign. Now he confiscated it, on the pretext that the Accessory Transit Company had failed

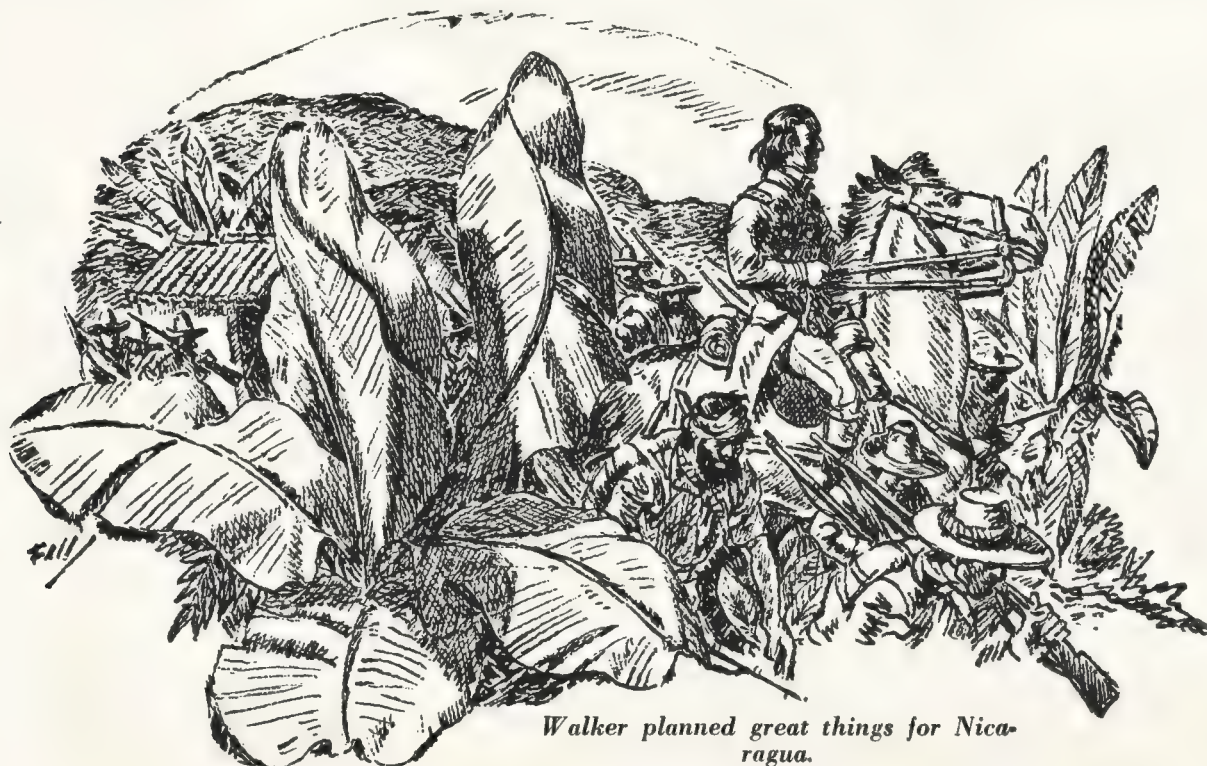
to pay the royalties prescribed by the franchise. This confiscation was engineered by a minority group in the Accessory Transit Company—the same gentlemen who had backed his original expedition for precisely that purpose.

The major stockholder in the bilked Accessory Transit Company was Cornelius Vanderbilt. And Vanderbilt, himself a ruthless and hard-driving empire builder, vowed he would ruin the men who had swindled him.

THERE was another, stronger, but less clearly defined force operating against Walker: Great Britain. Queen Victoria's tight little island had reasons for wanting the so-called Mosquito Coast to remain weak and disunited. She exerted a vague sort of protectorate on the eastern half of Central America which gave her all the economic advantages but none of the responsibilities of actual ownership.

Vanderbilt's agents and money set about forming a coalition of the remaining Central American governments—Honduras, Guatemala, San Salvador and Costa Rica—with which to oppose Walker. The British government generously made muskets and arms available—relics of the Napoleonic wars, but good enough for Central American fighting—at bargain prices. Back in the United States, Wheeler's recognition of Walker's government was repudiated.

For Central America, it was a sharply fought war. Walker consistently outmarched and outfought the coalition forces. But sheer weight of numbers beat him down. With never more



Walker planned great things for Nicaragua.



Walker consistently outmarched and outfought the coalition forces.

than twenty-five hundred men, including native allies, he faced armies totaling eighteen thousand. Finally, by the spring of 1857 Walker was cornered in the city of Rivas within a few miles of the Transit Road. His defense was heroic but hopeless. The siege dragged on. There were reinforcements—ample for the relief of Rivas—on the east coast at Greytown; but their leader, afraid to advance, frittered them away.

By the end of April, Commander Charles Henry Davis, commanding the U.S.S. *St. Mary's*, intervened at Rivas to prevent further bloodshed. On May 1st, General Walker spiked his guns, spoiled his powder, surrendered the pitiful remnant of his army—463 men, of whom nearly one-half were wounded or sick—and marched out of Rivas with full military honors. He and the other Americans were to be transported safely to Panama. His native supporters were guaranteed amnesty by the victors.

Walker arrived in New Orleans on May 27th and was welcomed royally. Claiming that his war was won except for the interference of Davis, he toured the principal cities of the United States, and was thunderously received. He contrived a brief interview with President Buchanan, announcing himself as the captive president of Nicaragua. Assured of popular if not of public support, he planned a new campaign to regain his government.

In the middle of November he eluded the Federal authorities and slipped out of Mobile aboard the ship *Fashion*, with three hundred filibusters,

including six of the original Immortals. They managed a landing near Greytown on November 24, 1857. Walker established a base, and sent out a company to capture the Transit route.

On the 6th and 7th of December his camp was quietly blockaded by a flotilla of British and American ships. Commodore Hiram Paulding, sixty-year-old hero of a dozen nautical adventures, was in command of the American Home Squadron. He landed three hundred marines, marched them into a position which dominated Walker's camp. Walker accepted the inevitable and surrendered.

Paulding brought him back to the United States aboard the sidewheel frigate *Wabash*. An embarrassed government did not know quite what to do with its prisoner. The South (pro manifest destiny) tended to favor Walker. The North (pro vested interests) backed Paulding. President Buchanan, vacillating, relieved Paulding of his command, yet praised him as a gallant officer. Walker, awaiting trial in Mobile, sat down to pen his memoirs. "The War in Nicaragua," written in the third person and a remarkably impartial accounting of his campaigns, was published in the spring of 1860.

Meanwhile, he was plotting his return to Nicaragua. Throughout the spring little groups of determined men stealthily embarked from southern ports, bound for the Isthmus. In June, Walker himself sailed. In August he moved against the Honduran city of Trujillo with about one hundred men.

On the sixth he carried it, losing six dead, six badly wounded.

The city was a valuable prize; but Walker, alone and without hope of reinforcement, could not expect to hold it. The British man-of-war *Icarus*, Captain Norvell Salmon commanding, entered the harbor. The city was ringed by seven hundred Hondurans. On August 21st Salmon suggested that Walker surrender.

Instead, Walker, with his sixty-five remaining men, slipped out of the city at midnight and began a swift retreat to the south. Somewhere below Trujillo was a Honduran revolutionary army which was supposed to support Walker's insurrection. Walker found the revolutionists' camp, but it was deserted. For more than a week he manned the barricades. Less than fifty men remained, many of them wounded. On September 3, Captain Salmon landed with two boatloads of sailors and demanded his surrender. Walker capitulated, with the clear understanding that he was surrendering to Her Majesty's government.

APPARENTLY Salmon did not consider the bargain binding, for three days later he turned Walker over to the Honduran authorities in Trujillo.

Six days later—September 12, 1860—the order for his execution was received. Walker might not have had to die—a last-minute appeal to the U. S. authorities, a renunciation of his claims, could have saved him—but he had said in his slow, measured drawl:

"The President of Nicaragua is a Nicaraguan; and as such—he dies."

THE HEROIC BATTLE STORY OF AN AMERICAN INFANTRY PLATOON THAT FOUGHT THROUGH THE HUERTGEN FOREST, TOLD WITHOUT HEROICS BY ITS LEADER.

Dagwood

THIS is the story of the "little picture." It tells of forty men who started out from Normandy on a march to the Huertgen Forest in Germany. In five months' time, thirty-nine of the original forty, plus approximately fifty replacements, had become casualties. Ten Silver Stars were won during this period, with two Oak-Leaf Clusters in lieu of second Silver Stars. The awards of Bronze Star Medals and Purple Hearts were too numerous to count.

This was the First Platoon, Company C, Sixteenth Infantry Regiment, First Infantry Division. I am proud to have been the platoon leader.

TO the casual observer, "Dagwood Red Charlie," or Company C, Sixteenth Infantry Regiment, might sound just like another rifle company. But to those who fought in it from the Normandy invasion, through France and Belgium into Germany, it was a living thing; it was "Charlie Company."

Of what happened before Normandy, I can say little. The company's record in Africa and Sicily had been brilliant, but the men participating in those campaigns were now few in number. Most of the original complement had become casualties, seriously wounded, killed or captured. All the remaining old-timers carried scars as witness to their encounters.

The company that landed in Arzeu bore only a faint resemblance to that storming Omaha Beach in Normandy. And the company that landed in Normandy was not the one that guarded the Czechoslovakian border at the war's end. The supply sergeant was still the same, and a few cooks and one or two men in company headquarters remained. The rest were gone. Most of them had not survived that episode in the Huertgen Forest just outside of Stolberg, Germany.

I was a typical replacement officer when I joined the company on June 22, 1944. The beaches had already been taken, and our sector now enjoyed a brief lull in the action. The Army, with considerable astuteness, had estimated the casualties on Omaha Beach would be about 50 per cent, and had prepared for this by grouping replacements into "packages" of fourteen men each. Each such "package" had riflemen, machine

gunners, automatic riflemen, and one platoon leader. These groups had already been assigned to the various units even before the assault on the beaches, and were quickly fed into the gaps that had existed after the beachhead had been established.

Our "package" went through the regular chain of command before we reached Charlie Company. The code name "Dagwood Red Charlie" is the Army way of denoting a particular unit. "Dagwood" stood for the Sixteenth Infantry Regiment; "Red" for the First Battalion, the next lower headquarters; and "Charlie" for Company "C." There also was a code word for the First Division, of which the Sixteenth Infantry was a part, but since there is only one Sixteenth Infantry Regiment in the Army, the code for our division, "Danger," was never included when designating a lower unit.

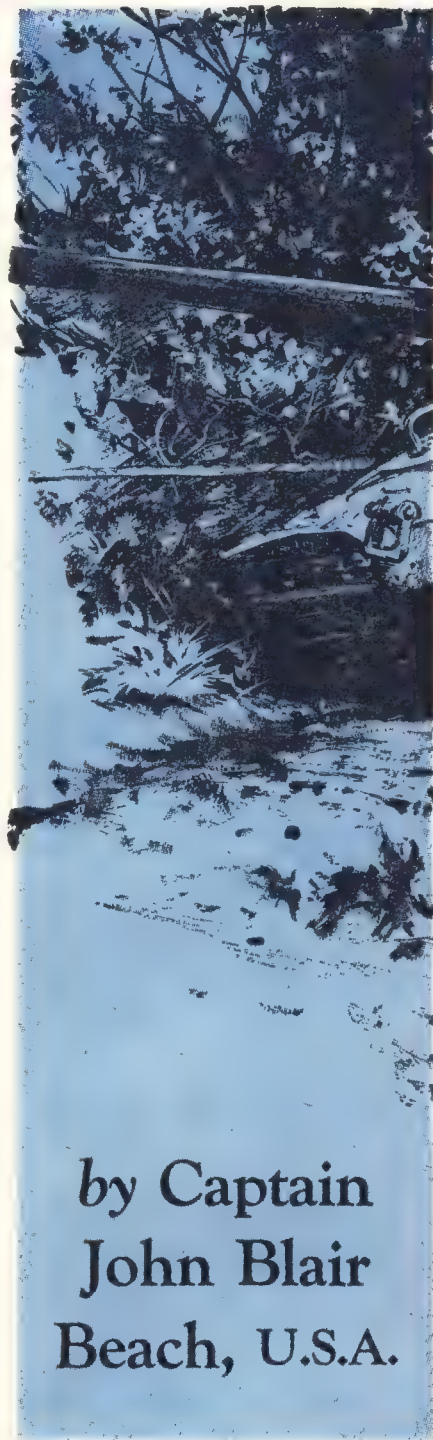
Pulled off the line, the battered company was resting to the rear of the First Division positions at Caumont, and being in reserve, had dug in along the hedgerows that are so characteristic of this part of France.

A hedgerow, rather than being a thin line of shrubbery, is a thick mound of dirt, roughly six feet across at the bottom and four feet at the top. Through this earthen embankment are entangled the roots of trees planted perhaps a century before. Standing about four feet in height, these banks presented as natural an emplacement as one could desire.

The company command post lay behind another hedgerow, a hundred yards back from the dug-in positions. When I first saw Company Commander Victor H. Briggs of New York City, he was having coffee in the only comfortable chair in the area: the front seat of his jeep. His long legs were leisurely stretched out over the dashboard onto the hood, as he enjoyed a cigarette.

"Glad to see you, Beach," he said, shaking my hand. "We sure need replacements." He pointed to the water can on the ground by the jeep. "Have some coffee."

Captain Briggs' smiling face did not show the iron that was beneath. He had already been awarded two Silver Stars for actions in Africa and Sicily, and had been recommended for the Distinguished Service Cross for deliberately drawing fire to himself so that his company might advance.



by Captain
John Blair
Beach, U.S.A.

I was given command of the First Platoon, which held the right flank of the company. Technical Sergeant Floyd Youngman, from Seattle, Washington, my platoon sergeant, had been a private when the company entered Oran. My platoon guide, Staff Sergeant Jim Dyer, from Indiana, was also a veteran of Africa and Sicily.

Red Charlie – One



Before the German crew was able to open fire, Pratt was leveling his rifle into the open door of the turret.

Charlie Company's rest was of short duration, and we moved up along dusty roads to the front, occupying the foxholes of the company we relieved. We found the sector so quiet it was hard to realize we were only 300 feet from the enemy lines. "Don't kid yourself, Lieutenant," Sergeant Youngman told me; "this

quiet is apt to fool you. Out there are guys waiting to kill you if they get the chance."

Before us, nothing but pastoral stillness. A hot July wind had caused leaves to flutter in the trees; and a rustic well, complete with bucket swaying jerkily on its chain, made a most inviting picture.

It was a peaceful scene, but we knew that something big was in the air. Patton was reported to be in the vicinity, and was quoted as saying: "We'll be in Paris by the middle of August."

Then, on the 21st of July, Captain Briggs called the platoon leaders together. "We're going to attack," he



Left to act as a sniper, he evidently didn't want to risk his life in such an endeavor, and for this I was profoundly grateful.

said quietly. "The Third Armored Division is going to punch a hole and drive all the way to Avranches on the other side of the peninsula. The Ninth and First divisions are to follow and cut off the Germans still in the peninsula. We'll be in reserve at first, but the whole Army is going to go through so fast that there'll be plenty of fighting all the way." There were approximately forty thousand Germans north of the road from St. Lo to Coutances, a city near Avranches, which was to be the final stopping place. . . . Our position in

the line was taken over by the Fifth Division.

As rain delayed the attack scheduled for the 22nd of July, the next few days saw plenty of hot poker games; and where a hundred dollars had been won in the morning, a hundred dollars was sure to be lost in the evening. The radio gave reports of an attempted assassination of Adolf Hitler. On the 25th, the weather began to clear, and at 09:45 air bombardment started.

Thousands of anti-personnel bombs were dropped on enemy emplace-

ments. Some of these bombs had dropped on our own positions, killing American soldiers, including Lieutenant General Lesley McNair, Army Ground Forces Commander, who had gone forward to observe the attack.

The attack was again postponed because of inclement weather; but on the 26th of July an even heavier assault of medium and heavy bombers thundered death down upon the enemy. A total of fifteen thousand tons of bombs was dropped during the two days preceding our advance to Marigny, blasted by its share of the air assault.

In the forward movement, it was felt that long columns driving deep into the German-held territory could cut the enemy into small, easily dealt-with groups, and would be the most expedient means of cleaning up the area. In accordance with this plan, the infantry moved toward Coutances on the narrow roads, by-passing the areas between them.

Occasionally, on our way past the wrecked buildings and ravaged fields, we would come upon a disheveled German soldier sitting disconsolately at the side of the road, waving a dirty white handkerchief. We soon discovered why they were unwilling to die for the Fuehrer. In many cases they were Ukrainians, Czechs, Poles and other conquered peoples who had been impressed into the German Army. No wonder they surrendered at the first opportunity!

SOME that we met were not of this type, however.

Although split off from the main roads by our swift advance, many small pockets of the enemy kept up a fierce resistance, such as met the leading elements of our battalion near the little village of La Chapelle. Here C Company made a momentary stop.

Around us lay the wreckage of both German and American tanks and equipment, while a hundred yards down the road the Germans now held out in one farmhouse and outbuildings, crowding what tanks and heavy weapons they had left behind the thick masonry.

All platoon leaders were called up to company headquarters. "This is the situation," Captain Briggs told us: "Both A and B companies have been hurt badly and can't move. We're going to attack through B Company and relieve them."

The hedgerow country is one that is conducive to defense rather than to offense. Machine guns are usually fixed at the corners, and are well dug-in so that they can give murderous fire in two directions. There is but one way to attack: each squad must divide itself along both sides of a hedgerow and advance directly into enemy fire. Crossing the open

fields is of course prevented by the enemy's lines of fire.

To stop the machine guns we would have liked to use our mortars—a few well-placed shells can knock out any machine gun. But the mortars could not be put in position to fire in time, so we had to advance without them, passing over the dead of B Company, keeping our heads well below the top of the hedgerows, as bullets crackled and snapped over our heads.

ONE machine-gun burst had accounted for five men of B Company, whose broken, blood-spattered bodies lay in a wooded hollow we had to cross. This was the farthest forward B Company had been able to go. Beside these bodies was the remains of a man, the lower portion of whose torso had been blown away by a mortar blast, more disfiguring in its effect than any machine gun. Between us and the enemy, cattle grazed peacefully, occasionally flicking their tails as the crackle of bullets made them think of flies.

The remains of this element of B Company had fallen back; my platoon now alone faced the enemy. I took personal charge of one squad, and Youngman the second, while the third was to cover our advance. As we reached the hollow where the dead men lay, the German machine gun reopened fire, hitting one of my men in the hand. I saw immediately that the enemy could kill off every one of the men in the squad I controlled, without our being able to prevent it.

I pulled back out of the field of fire, dispersing the men along a hedge parallel to the enemy, and began to answer with rifles and my one automatic rifle. Mortar shells began to drop all around us, the fragments humming their song of hate as they filled the air. One particularly vicious mortar fragment gouged out a piece of a man's leg; he involuntarily shrieked in agony as he went down.

In the meantime, Youngman was also stopped because of the fierceness of the enemy fire. The trying situation was too much for one man in his squad, who became a victim of combat fatigue, falling to the ground and eating dirt in his hysteria. Youngman took hold of him like a father and led him safely to the rear.

These were my first casualties, and the platoon now comprised thirty-seven men.

Youngman in his advance had run into a small enemy outpost, and had taken them prisoner. As we had suspected, we were not encountering the same type of men we had met earlier. These were S.S. men. Youngman reported to me that one of the prisoners was French, which sur-

prised me, as foreigners in the S.S. were uncommon. I questioned him.

"What are you doing in that uniform?" I asked him in French.

He was only a young boy, perhaps seventeen years old. "It is not my fault; I was ordered into the German Army against my will."

"Against your will? Were you drafted?"

"Yes. My home is in Alsace; and when the Germans took over, they put us all into the army."

That didn't explain why he was in an S.S. uniform, as the S.S. was supposed to be a volunteer outfit. However, as we had an excellent interrogation center in the rear, I sent the prisoners back, questioning them no further.

As darkness approached, we received word the attack was not to be resumed until next morning, when a platoon of medium tanks would be attached to the company. We dug in on the line we were holding.

AROUND midnight I was awakened by a call from Captain Briggs: "Beach, take out a patrol—yourself and two others—and feel out the German positions in front."

A patrol is the most hazardous of the infantry's undertakings from the standpoint of the individual soldier. He, accompanied by a few companions, must leave the comparative safety of his own lines and cross into enemy territory to obtain data as to the strength and location of various enemy positions. Often the patrol is never heard of again. A night patrol might be considered slightly more



Woody's pride was a four-inch handle-bar mustache.

popular than a day patrol, because of the better concealment afforded by the darkness.

Our check revealed nothing. The enemy had pulled out of the hollow where their machine gunners had caused so much trouble; we could not find any of the positions still occupied by the enemy. As I was reporting this to company headquarters by telephone from my own command post, there was sudden fire from the hedgerow we had just crossed. An enemy patrol had practically followed us back! It was a wonder we hadn't tangled with them in the pitch darkness.

Next morning's move was uneventful. The area was clear, and we continued uninterrupted even beyond Coutances down to Mayenne, which is situated south of Avranches and Mortain, at the hub of the Brittany peninsula. Mayenne was in a state of flux. The Germans had moved out, and their present lines were only known to be east of us.

In the middle of the town we found the barracks of the German garrison now departed. Here we discovered a typical example of German tactics: knowing that we would not bomb hospitals, they had painted red crosses on the roofs of the buildings.

We set up our positions on the forward slope of a hill to the east of Mayenne. To the left of us lay B Company, extended across a broad road leading into the city. Attached to them was a platoon of tank destroyers, equal to tanks in firepower, but not in armor.

Our platoons were arrayed to the right of B Company, with my platoon between those of Lt. "Skipper" Skinner and Lt. Atkinson, leaders of the Second and Third platoons, respectively. Since several hundred yards separated the First Platoon from Atkinson, I had to curve our open right flank back like a fishhook and hope that the Germans didn't discover the gap.

Attacking with fury that night, the Germans smashed into B Company defenses with tanks and infantry, wiping out the tank destroyers in short order. A smaller force attacked Atkinson simultaneously, and missiles known as "screaming meemies" because of the eerie howl they gave in flight, began to descend on B Company from a giant rocket-launcher a few hundred yards from our position.

Our forward elements, so close they could hear the muttering of the German soldiers as they attacked, pulled back several times, and had to be led by the squad leaders personally back to their outposts. I called the outposts in as several German tanks appeared and commenced to fire directly at us, hitting three of our men with shrapnel.

I moved the platoon to the bridge, and seeing the movement of Germans across the river, began to fire every weapon I had.

The gap between the First and Third platoons was a matter of much concern, and as a partial remedy, Captain Briggs sent up a heterogeneous group composed of men from company headquarters; this was assigned to reinforce the right flank of the First Platoon, although little could be done to connect me with Atkinson. But the enemy continued to put their whole effort behind their attacks to the right and left, and did not attempt to break through the middle. And the line held. With day-break, the Germans retired, making no further attempt to take our position. Instead, they directed their assault to Mortain, several miles to the north, where they were finally beaten off.

Then followed several days of comparative quiet. The Germans sent over a few shells, one of them exploding directly over the foxhole of one man. The concussion shook him up a bit but didn't hurt him. Yet five yards away, a man in another foxhole was killed from the effects of that shellburst. Such are the laws of chance—and of war.

Each day several patrols investigated the enemy positions to our front, discovering that although the Germans had pulled back several hundred yards, they held a strong position to our right front, firing daily upon our patrols. Once a patrol was ambushed, and two men were hit, one in the arm and the other in the shoulder. They were able to fight their way back, killing at least one of the enemy. The wounded were thus saved from the Germans, and sent back to our own hospitals. The platoon, which in the action at Mayenne had been reduced to thirty-four, now stood at three less.

It was difficult persuading the French farmers to keep behind our lines. Once an irate farmer was brought to me. He had been picked up by riflemen as he was attempting to cross the lines. "But this is *my*

farm!" he cried. "I have to milk the cows, and take care of my land!" His house was almost directly in our lines, and his farm was held partly by us, and partly by the Germans, the rest being in unoccupied territory. I explained the situation as best I could, but he left disconsolate. He didn't have to worry about his cows being milked, though; we had quite a few ex-farmers in the platoon. . . .

A part of the platoon occupied land on which was the house of a well-to-do Parisian lady. She complained vigorously to me when one of the trees near her house was accidentally knocked over by a jeep, and wanted to know who was going to pay for it. That irked me: "This is just as much your war as ours, and you'll have to expect accidents." She agreed somewhat ruefully, although she explained that whenever the Germans had damaged anything, they had paid for it. I answered that I didn't think they would reimburse her for the big hole one of their exploding shells had made on the second floor of her house.

We were willing, however, to pay her for chickens and eggs, which was all right with her. Dyer had already appointed himself cook for platoon headquarters, and for a while we enjoyed a change from the Army rations.

We had now been at Mayenne for several days; troops to the south of us were already close to Paris, and the German position was becoming untenable. We received reports that the enemy in front of us were pulling

out, and on the 11th of August I received orders to take out a strong patrol and cover thoroughly the area in front of us. I took fourteen men, including two automatic riflemen, and passed through our lines, forward into the territory from which many times before our patrols had been fired upon.

Everything seemed calm enough. There were cows grazing in well-kept fields, and a pair of horses nickered in another pasture as we approached. I recognized the house previously occupied by the German elements. Gaping holes from our artillery marred the outside walls, and the interior was a shambles from looting. A dog chained to his doghouse had succumbed to hunger and thirst. Tied to a stake was a goat, surrounded by a roughly circular area, nibbled bare. We untied the animal, and it gratefully followed for the rest of the way and back into our own lines. Nearby were a few dead sheep and goats, hit by shell fragments, and over all was the smell of death.

We saw none of the enemy until we had proceeded some yards beyond the house. Suddenly I stopped short. A German soldier lay in front of us in his foxhole, regarding us amiably. He had apparently been watching our circuitous journey since we had left our own lines, and had made no effort to fall back or to open fire.

Beside him, when he willingly surrendered, were his rifle, much ammunition, and several hand grenades.





Illustrated by
HAMILTON GREENE

(Who was also wounded in
the Huertgen Forest.)

From his manner I assumed that he had been left there alone, possibly to act as a sniper or to give warning if the enemy approached. He evidently didn't want to risk his life in such an endeavor, and for this I was profoundly grateful. He would have got me first.

We moved forward with more caution, but walked straight into what had been the German strong-point without meeting any more of the enemy. The fortified position, well protected between a double row of hedges, was completely deserted. There were positions, I estimated, for about 150 men. Still farther on, we found the location of the enemy command post, and alongside, in forlorn glory, three freshly dug graves.

BESIDE the individual foxholes were the remains of what must have been a long and happy stay in Mayenne—civilian shoes, women's wear, beer and champagne bottles.

Refugees in another farmhouse a little farther on, told us that the Germans had withdrawn the previous night, for Alençon, in the Falaise area. There was nothing now to keep us at Mayenne.

When the regiment moved toward the Falaise Pocket the next day, Patton was driving toward Paris. While his columns rolled deep into enemy-held territory, the First Army swung northward to cut off the Germans remaining in the Pocket. In the meantime, the British had taken Caën, and were pushing south.

Hot food and mail awaited us in the assembly area, and we had a few hours' rest while Captain Briggs was up at Battalion Headquarters receiving orders for the company. By nightfall we had moved to a forward assembly area, and were ready to jump off.

It could not be said that we were in an area known to be clear of the enemy. Indeed, no one knew where the Germans were. During the move to the forward assembly point, there was considerable confusion. At one

time, in the darkness, a German column of infantry blundered into our own, and did not discover their error until too late. They spent the remainder of the war as guests of the American Army. In another instance, where M.P.'s were directing the movement of tanks, a German Mark V tank had somehow got into the middle of the American armored column, and when signaled into the motor pool, dutifully followed. They realized their mistake only after getting out of the tank and falling into the chow line.

THAT night Charlie Company was chosen to lead the regimental advance toward Les Roussiers, a town several kilometers from La Ferte Macé. The Reconnaissance Platoon, which had been at work ahead of us, had fallen back, and was now halted at a farmhouse near the jump-off point. The platoon leader told us that a German tank had caused him trouble somewhere in front of us.

The First Platoon was chosen to lead the march, and as platoon leader, I was in command of the "point," usually composed of five men at the head of the moving column.

Cautiously hugging the bushes on either side of the road, we moved ahead, leaving about twenty-five yards between us and the rest of the platoon, which led the other elements of Charlie Company. To the rear followed the rest of the Sixteenth Infantry Regiment.

Here and there we came upon empty foxholes that had been dug by the enemy. We did not know what the fields on either side of the road contained; they were to be cleared out by forces to our rear. We later learned that they were occupied at the time by German forces, who, knowing nothing of our advance, had made no attempt to stop it.

Several times we heard the sound of a motor; and then from behind us, through the entire column of the regiment, came a vehicle that looked very much like a German *Volks-wagen*. At times our forces had used captured German vehicles; but to make sure, we halted it. A German colonel and his driver stared at us in amazement. We sent them as prisoners to the rear.

We continued our slow advance even more cautiously than before; because although we could stop a German jeep, rifles are a poor defense against the guns of a tank.

Corporal Rumadge came up to me and whispered that there was something in front of us. In the distance we could hear a faint tapping noise, growing in force as we advanced, until it sounded like a hammer striking against metal. Inching our way along, we soon spotted a tank in the dark-

ness, its gun pointing directly down our column. One of the crew was adjusting something on the front, while the others were inside. We could see no infantry.

Sending Rumadge with a man into the field to our right, and Private Pratt and a companion into the left field, I kept to the road with another rifleman. The tanker had apparently finished his project, and was preparing to return to his station inside the tank, when I stuck my Tommy gun into his belly. In the meantime Pratt had come in on the right side of the tank, and Rumadge on the other. The German was so surprised he didn't cry out, and before the crew was able to open fire, Pratt was leveling his rifle into the open door of the turret. After taking the men into custody, we set off a few bazooka rockets to destroy the tank's effectiveness in case it was retaken.

Reaching our objective without further incident, we were ordered to halt, and Captain Briggs told the assembled platoon leaders that we would be stopping here for a day. In the distance we could see the flames of another enemy tank which had been taken by friendly forces. Yet there was little sound of firing anywhere. Several of our security patrols brought in prisoners, but there were no casualties. The following day the Eighteenth Regiment of the First Division pushed through us, and the next day we started out toward Les Roussiers.

OUR company left the road, and swinging into the woods, struck across the country. In an advance of this type, the several platoons are frequently off by themselves, and in this case they became separated by several hundred yards. Occasionally a Frenchman who had been hiding in the woods would come up to greet us and to tell us that the Germans had already vacated the woods, but were still on the other side.

Leaving the woods, we had to cross many open fields, where there were not even hedgerows to break up the area. We had encountered nothing so far, but farther on, where hedgerows again began to appear, we found French farmers in the fields; however, instead of being glad to see us, these seemed very frightened. And rightly so, for the scouts I sent up as far as the road which extended across our line of advance about fifty yards ahead, came back reporting that they could hear German voices.

I moved up with Sergeant Eddie Fehrenbach, leader of the first squad. As there was a hedgerow running parallel to the road, we dispersed the squad behind it and waited until two of the enemy walked right into us, to be picked up quietly. A hundred yards to our left, we could see a sizable

German force, men walking casually about, oblivious of our presence.

In the meantime, Sergeant Youngman had moved the right squad into a field where five German half-track vehicles were parked. The crews, who were not prepared for the assault, surrendered after a brief fire fight. It is quite an accomplishment to pick up five half-tracks with only one squad, and to do it without a casualty borders on the miraculous.

Because we were in fatigues at the time, easily mistakable for German uniforms at a distance, Fehrenbach and I moved ahead of the leading elements of the platoon as they advanced, Fehrenbach calling out to the Germans in their own language. Before they realized that they had been tricked, we were almost on top of them.

THE Germans dived into ditches on both sides of the road, firing at us as they went down. Fehrenbach let loose with his rifle, and I with my Tommy gun, as we leaped behind a hedgerow. An ominous sound of motors came from their rear, and several half-tracks and two Mark IV tanks swung onto the road, and headed toward us, accompanied by infantry, firing as they came.

I sent Fehrenbach to get his squad, and tried to keep what diversion I could with my Tommy gun. Bypassing me, the Germans kept to their tanks and half-tracks, and headed toward the two leading squads of my platoon. The last half-track ground to a stop immediately across the hedgerow from me, and I could hear the men setting up a machine gun. Sticking my gun across the hedgerow, I opened fire into their faces, and after emptying my Tommy gun, broke all existing records for the hundred-yard dash getting out of there and back to the platoon. I had the satisfaction before I went of seeing them give up their attempt at setting up a machine gun, and instead, following the rest of the armored column, which was getting into a hot spot.

In the meantime Sgts. Youngman and Fehrenbach had dispersed their squads and called up their bazooka teams. The mortar squad attached to us began to lob shells at the oncoming half-tracks. One bazooka team accounted for three of the half-tracks, and a shell from the mortar landed directly into the fourth, the one which had previously attempted to set up a machine-gun position. The tanks broke through, driving pell-mell through our small column in the direction of the Fatherland. The situation might have been untenable had they stopped to fight; even as it was, several of our men had been hit by enemy fire, and one man killed.

Having lost their armor, the Germans now attempted to drive us off by using their ground weapons. Two of them tried to man a machine gun down the road to our front, but Corporal Rumadge with accurate fire kept them so disconcerted that they never got the chance to open fire. Fehrenbach then rushed the position, capturing them. We set up a defense at the road junction beyond, but no more of the enemy were seen.

To summarize the encounter: the First Platoon had captured eight half-tracks (having picked up three more in our advance to the road junction), put four others out of commission, killed several of the enemy, and captured seventy prisoners, five machine guns, one 81-millimeter mortar, one 75-millimeter howitzer, many rifles and automatic rifles.

It was fast becoming apparent to us that we were ourselves being bled to death. We had three wounded men of our own, and one dead. That left twenty-seven of the original forty.

By this time we were a thousand yards beyond where the battle had started. I looked in vain on my map for the road junction I now held. It simply wasn't there. There wasn't much time to ponder the matter, for the rattle of armor in the direction from which I had come snapped me to attention.

Simultaneously Adamczyk, the platoon runner, breathlessly ran toward me from company headquarters. "Hey, Lieutenant!" he shouted. "You'd better get out of there! You're standing right in the middle of the Eighteenth Regiment's objective!"

As we marched back, civilians who had been in hiding during the fracas

came out of their homes and cheered us. A group of little children accompanied by their mothers came up to me, and bowing, shyly handed me a bouquet of flowers for the men of the platoon. This was such a touching gesture that all I could come out with was a feeble "Merci." I happened to have picked up a pile of women's and children's clothing, wrapped and ready for mailing to Germany, and this I handed to the children.

By the 18th of August, the Second Battalion had made contact with the British north of us, and we were able to take a week's rest before moving on. During this time we received a few replacements, among them Lieutenant James H. Wood of Atlanta, Georgia, who was temporarily assigned to my platoon. I now had thirty-two men, besides Wood and myself.

Woody's pride was a four-inch handle-bar mustache which he had cultivated since going overseas. That put him far in the lead of the rest of us, all of whom were trying to grow hair on the upper lip. A true Southerner, he would fight the Civil War at the slightest opportunity; and according to him, the present war was a mere diversion. We'd go back to fighting Lee's battles when there was a lull.

Although in a rest area, there was no lessening of the rigorous military discipline, and considerable preparation was required for the coming



movement. During the exercises one man was accidentally shot through the shoulder. That left twenty-six men out of the original forty, the platoon having a total of thirty-one, which included the five new men.

ON the 27th of August we loaded into trucks and moved 150 miles to the Marne River, just south of Paris, to the village of Lagny.

The Germans held the east bank of the river, and there was scattered fighting between the French Forces of the Interior and the Germans at the bridges as we entered the town.

As we moved into the city, we were under perfect observation of the enemy, who immediately sent over a heavy artillery concentration. The bursting shells played havoc with our column, hitting two men, one fatally. The men scattered into the doorways for protection as the shells burst in the streets, sending thousands of jagged metal pieces whistling through the air. Suddenly the barrage ceased, and Youngman and I gathered up the men and moved out of the area to a more covered street nearer the river.

The enemy began to fire at us from across the river, hitting another man by rifle fire as we sought the protection

of the buildings. We pulled him into the protection of a doorway, only to see him die in our hands. In the meantime we were returning the fire, having set up all three of our automatic rifles plus Garands, and swept the river clean of the enemy. All about us the French patriots were also bringing fire to the enemy, and the Germans pulled back from their side of the river out of our range. On both sides of the river were the bodies of both the French and the Germans, comrades at last in death.

There were only twenty-four men left of the original forty. One new man was also among the casualties, leaving twenty-eight in the platoon. It seemed that we were being inexorably plucked, one by one.

Lagny now being clear of the enemy, I was ordered to take the platoon out on a mission to contact a force of French FFI men who had succeeded in driving another group of Germans across the river at Tournay to the north. Since we were the first troops the civilians had seen since the enemy, we were given a fine reception; although all credit should go to French patriots, armed mostly with pistols and pitchforks, who forced the Germans to give up Tournay.

The lieutenant in charge of the French forces was a gendarme from Paris. He spoke English as well as I do French, and between the two of us the conversation was understandable. He told me that the Germans were receiving reinforcements across the river, and were threatening to recross the bridge into the town, and asked for my support.

I moved the platoon to the river along the left side of the bridge approach, and seeing the movement of Germans across the river, immediately began to fire every weapon I had. The Germans retired in disorder, and we quickly moved out to the other side of the bridge and again let loose with a burst of fire. The enemy had pulled into a group of buildings, leaving some dead behind them, and began to return our fire, although not hitting us.

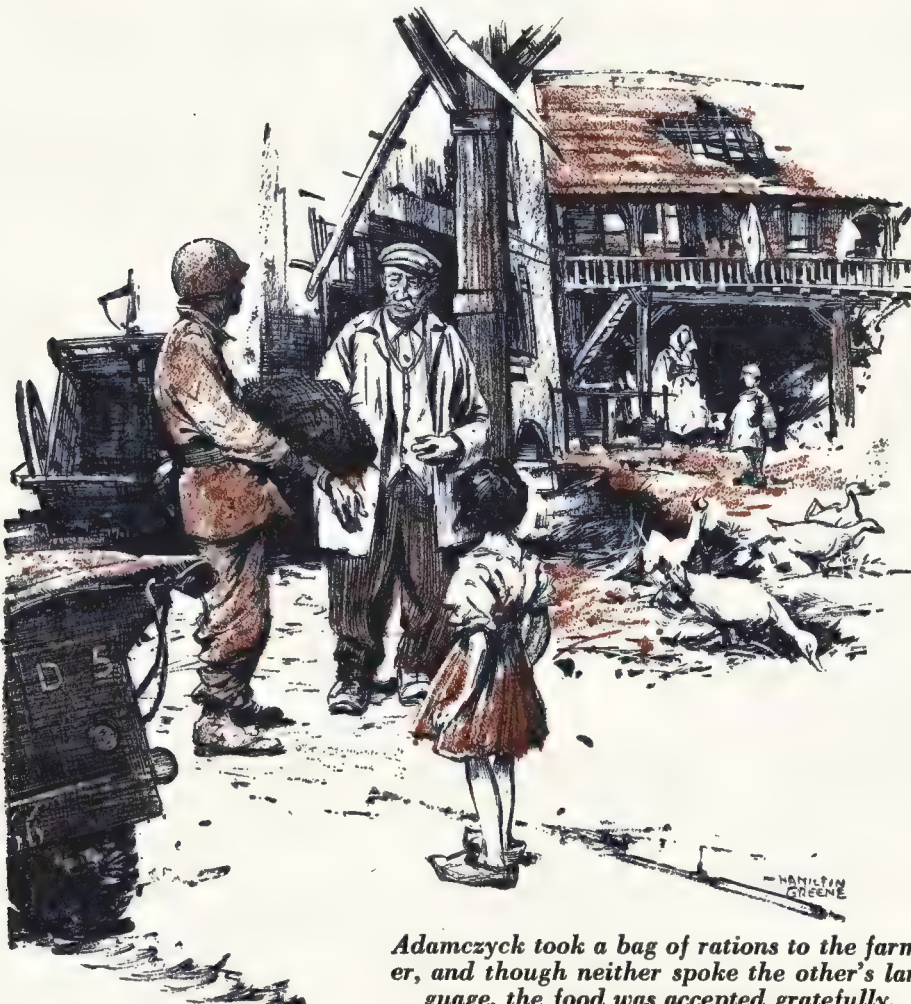
Then we crossed the bridge again, pulling back about a hundred yards. By happy coincidence, there was a tavern there, and the proprietor came out with champagne. As we were enjoying this refreshment, the Germans began to send over mortar shells, blasting our end of the bridge. From a safe distance we enjoyed the display, particularly since it meant that they would have that much less ammunition to use later, and were getting nowhere. They made no attempt to assault the bridge, probably assuming that the Americans had arrived in force.

OUR mission accomplished, we returned to our base, outside the city of Lagny, where I was ordered to place outposts toward the approaches from the west. Directly behind us was the headquarters of the local FFI group, and after the platoon was placed, Sergeant Youngman, Adamczyk, and I went back to contact the French.

They were having a party. This was their first day of freedom, and in celebration they had gathered up all the local girls who had collaborated with the Germans and shaved off their hair. While the girls squatted unhappily in the center of the room, the members of the Resistance forces taunted them while themselves enjoying a dinner taken from captured German stores. We were invited to take any of the girls we wished for ourselves, but we politely turned down the invitation.

The French commander informed me that he had men out in front of us, so we agreed on a password that would let them through the lines without incident. The night passed with the FFI bringing in a few prisoners, and a few security patrols of our own being sent out. Before dawn we were moving toward Soissons.

Charlie Company moved out with a platoon of tanks attached. The



Adamczyk took a bag of rations to the farmer, and though neither spoke the other's language, the food was accepted gratefully.

First Platoon was again in the lead; and as usual, all we knew about the enemy was that they were somewhere out in front of us. We rode on top of the tanks, occasionally stopping to cut German communication wires that were by the road. We were to stop at St. Pierre-Aigle, which had been the regimental command post in World War I.

As we were approaching the town, which was on a small mountain, Captain Briggs noticed German armored cars grouped at the foot of a second mountain beyond. In the valley between the two mountains was the village of Cœuvre. I was sent with my two leading squads and two tanks to enter the town, while the rest of the company moved into St. Pierre-Aigle. The inhabitants at first mistook us for Germans, inasmuch as we were still in our green fatigues. They were delighted to discover their mistake, and told us about several enemy tanks that were on the other side of the town.

ADVANCING cautiously, we could see that the last of the tanks had just moved up a hill, unaware of our presence. We sent out a good deal of fire in their direction, rapidly changing our position while we fired, to give the impression of being much more numerous than we really were. In the exchange of bullets, some of the enemy fell, but, because of their picking targets where we had been, and not where we were, we were unharmed.

We moved back to St. Pierre-Aigle, where the company was already in position facing the valley. Directly to our rear were the buildings occupied by the regimental headquarters in the last war; these again were occupied by regimental headquarters. Our lines were about three hundred yards behind the lines the regiment had held in 1918!

On the opposite side of Cœuvre the Germans were milling about on the mountain, sufficiently out of range of small-arms fire. There were frequent artillery exchanges, the shell fragments snipping the branches of the trees above us, and pounding the ground all around us. One man was hit and killed instantly. Another man was also killed instantly when a fragment hit an anti-tank grenade he was carrying, exploding it. This left twenty-two out of the original forty. The platoon strength was down to twenty-six.

As night fell upon a calmer scene, I led another patrol down the slopes of the hill toward Cœuvre, past the now almost obliterated trenches of a quarter-century before.

The Germans had not attempted to move back into the town, and the people were celebrating its liberation,

although they were really between the two lines. Their occupation by the enemy had been particularly tragic, for the parish priest had been murdered a month before, because he had been suspected of participating in the French Underground.

We contacted the leader of the Underground at his home, and were invited to share his supper. On his mantelpiece he had placed the flags of France and America. "My wife sewed them together herself," he said to me proudly. "We have had them in readiness since we heard of the Allied invasion."

The next morning, at our invitation, he came to have breakfast with the First Platoon. He refused to eat the white bread that we had, preferring to take it home with him so that his child, who had never seen white bread, might have it.

The Germans had moved on during the night, retreating to the Belgian border. Following them, we moved out on trucks that morning, stopping for a day at Leon.

We camped on the land of an old farmer who, we discovered, hadn't had anything but potatoes to eat during the German occupation. As we had not tasted any potatoes except mixed with our rations, we asked if he would let us have some. He brought enough for the platoon, but when we offered to pay him, he refused, saying that he felt it to be an honor. Then we thought of our chocolate bars and cans of rations—the same old thing to us, but they would be a treat for his family. Adamczyk took a bag of them over to the farmer, and though neither could speak the other's language, the food was accepted gratefully.

Later that day Sergeant Fallet, leader of the second squad, came to my headquarters, and told me that about a thousand yards beyond our position lived some old family friends whom he hadn't seen since he was a child. Inasmuch as we constantly had to patrol the area to our front, I arranged for him to lead a small reconnaissance element forward. He returned later with news that the family was well.

Toward night, patrols of French FFI told us that the Germans were heading toward the Belgian border in the direction of Mons. With this intelligence, the Third Armored Division moved out early in the morning, and was able to reach the town before the German troops got there. Then we moved forward, following their general lines of advance. About a mile to the left of us, on another road, the German column was also heading for Mons, not realizing that the city had already been taken. We met them at the junction of the two roads, just outside the city.

The Eighteenth and Twenty-sixth regiments of the First Division were called into action to attack them from the south, while our regiment pushed on to meet the Third Armored. Charlie Company was to stop just outside the city, with my platoon defending the road by which we had come. We simply made an about-face and dug in.

To our front were hundreds of dead horses and broken-up German vehicles. The enemy was fleeing to our right front, harassed by the Air Force as the infantry closed in. Hundreds of Belgian civilians came running from their homes, each brandishing a sharp knife. And while the battle was going on only a few hundred yards away, they busied themselves butchering the animals, their fear of gunfire running a poor second to their desire for meat. Before long, only skeletons of the horses remained.

The First Division and the Third Armored had become entangled with a German corps, which was given no time to organize a defense. The enemy ranks were cut to pieces, and the remnants scattered, with no semblance of order. Sergeant Fehrenbach, in reconnoitering a position for his squad, ran into a group of four or five confused men and took them into custody. Sergeant Koon, leader of the third squad, also picked up several who had blundered into his position. Lieutenant Skinner found a German hiding within twelve feet of his command post. Even the men at company headquarters had similar experiences. One German was caught using the American latrine.

CAPTAIN BRIGGS led a patrol consisting of two jeeps, about ten riflemen, a couple of medium tanks, and three trucks, to an enemy-held village, and returned with prisoners riding the front bumpers of the jeeps, straddling the turrets of the tanks, and hanging onto the tailgates of the trucks. Several similarly equipped patrols were sent out to other points; and before the day had passed Charlie Company had captured about two hundred of the enemy.

That night an enemy patrol penetrated our lines, killing both men at our left outpost. On the right, two Germans jumped one man of the outpost; but the other guard, about ten feet away, shot both of them. The German patrol moved in behind the platoon, cutting off our communications with the company command post. One rifleman, posted on the left flank, was shot and wounded by the patrol. He reported to me that fourteen men had just passed him. After unsuccessfully searching for the enemy patrol, which seemed to have melted into the darkness, we took stock of our remaining men. We had nineteen men out of the original

platoon plus four replacements, making a total of twenty-three.

Later that night a second enemy patrol attempted to pierce our lines, but was cut down by our machine guns. We picked up a German lieutenant and six wounded men. We moved them to the rear in the early morning, after questioning them. The lieutenant was very emphatic in stating that Germany would win the war. "We've got a weapon we haven't used yet," he asserted with a knowing look.

"What kind of a weapon?" asked Youngman.

"I can't tell you that," answered the German mysteriously.

"You mean you don't know," retorted Youngman, to which there was no reply.

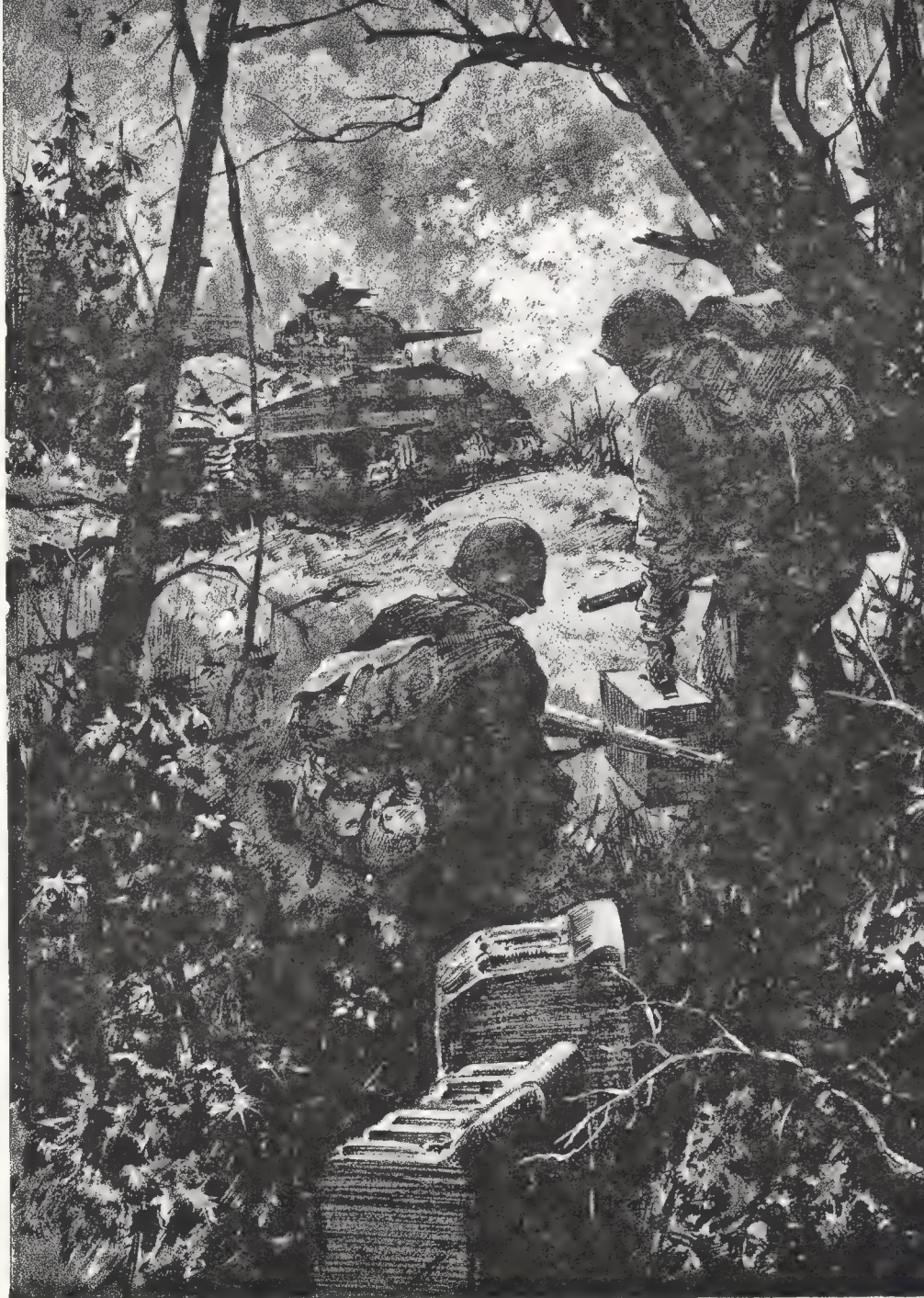
Many more prisoners were picked up during the day. Five German divisions had been destroyed at Mons, and over fifty thousand prisoners filled the First Division cages. The enemy strength on the Siegfried Line was estimated at only ten divisions.

THE speed with which we had moved had brought us too far forward of our supply lines to be receiving anything like an adequate amount of gasoline. Henceforth, much of our movement would have to be on foot.

The early morning of the 7th of September found us moving toward Huy, which stands astride the Meuse. There, as part of the all-round defense, the platoon was ordered to guard the river, directly across from the beautiful cathedral of Huy. Across the street from this imposing medieval structure we discovered a modern ice-cream parlor, and it is not surprising that within two hours the supply was sold out.

The river front was lined with wrecked buildings. A few days previously, the American Air Force had bombed all bridges crossing the river to cut off the German retreat. In many cases the bombs had hit homes of civilians, killing the occupants. Beside my command post was such a house, the upper floor a shambles. The sole survivor of the family was a little old grandmother, who told me that she bore the Americans no ill-will; that it was the chance of war. I offered her what food I could get from the rations, and asked her to eat with us.

Another elderly lady came up and told me sadly that as the Germans were leaving the city the day before, they had executed her son as a supposed member of the Underground. Besides, being a violation of the rules of warfare, under which even a spy is entitled to trial, this seemed purely vindictive, as they were moving out anyway. There were many cases in which the Germans had used unspeak-



We sent a couple of tanks in to clean out the pillbox.

able tortures in their attempts to crush the Resistance forces.

Liège, several miles to the east, was being abandoned by the Germans in much the same manner as they had left Huy. All whom they suspected of being in the Underground were murdered, as well as countless innocent persons. Tanks were abandoned at strategic points, to explode in front of lines of Belgian women waiting for their daily rations. Then, in pulling out of Liège, the Germans carted off the town's food supply, leaving only barrels of perishable ice cream.

Instead of stopping here, we passed on to Herve, near the German border. After stopping and setting up a defense line in case of counter-attack,

I was ordered to attach one squad to elements of the division reconnaissance troop, which was to patrol the area ahead of us and feel out the enemy.

Inasmuch as my squads each had only six or seven men, I took men from two squads and put them with Fehrenbach's squad, telling him to report to the platoon leader from the reconnaissance troop.

Going into the area beyond Herve, the patrol passed homes of cheering civilians. Then the cheering stopped abruptly; and Fehrenbach, sensing trouble, pulled his men off the vehicles and began to search the houses.

Suddenly, from the rear, came bursts of gunfire, and he found himself sur-

rounded. Germans lying in wait had ambushed the squad. Their aimed fire picked off our men right and left; and to make matters worse, American fighter planes, not realizing what was going on, strafed the squad, killing one man. The Germans had already killed another and taken five wounded men prisoner, including Corporal Rumadge.

Fehrenbach was able to get back to the vehicles with the five remaining men, and to get back safely to our lines. He came to me much affected by the ordeal. Fourteen men were left out of the original forty, and as two of the replacements had also been casualties, there remained only sixteen men in the platoon.

OUR losses were of course unimportant to the general advance, and the next day saw us on the way again. Though the platoons were at first in contact with each other, it was not long before they became separated, and the squads, now down to four men each, were almost separate units in themselves.

Following us were our support elements, under the control of Jim Wood, consisting of two light tanks and machine guns. It was not long before Wood had also lost touch with me. Sergeant Youngman, who had charge of the right squad with Koon, was about two hundred yards away, while I was with Fehrenbach and the remnants of his squad, plus Faller's second squad.

We found ourselves in a densely populated area as we approached Eupen, and we noticed that here the inhabitants spoke both French and German. They told us that the Germans had moved on that morning, leaving a number of wounded American soldiers at a farmhouse up ahead.

These might be Fehrenbach's men, I reasoned, and calling him forward, I brought the squads to a halt at the farmhouse. There we found four of our men being cared for by the farmer and his wife. Since they were unable to walk, the Germans had left them, taking Rumadge, who was in better condition. Fehrenbach stayed on with the casualties to wait for the medics, while the rest of us continued on the advance.

We had gone only a hundred yards when we ran into Jim Wood, who had driven a small enemy force into a clump of woods and was making it hot for them, though one of his two tanks was out of action.

His handlebar mustache bristling in the breeze as he snorted out invectives, he was the perfect picture of the man I would least like to have as an enemy. I have always suspected that the Germans just looked at him and ran. He had pulled his machine gunners off the tanks, and they were

spraying the woods, while he and his Tommy gun were covering the whole area, spattering bullets wherever there was movement.

When Youngman had come up from the right with his squad, bringing two prisoners and a captured machine gun, we moved forward into the woods. The enemy had retreated, but one straggler was just disappearing beyond a barbed-wire fence that enclosed the yard of a home. I pulled the trigger of my Tommy gun, and nothing happened. It had jammed.

With a curse, I ran forward, accompanied by Woody and Youngman. I pulled out my wire clippers and began feverishly to cut the fence. Then a woman who had apparently been observing the scene ran out of the house, protesting, and pointed to the gate next to me. I sheepishly opened it, but by that time the enemy had vanished.

Through the woods we came upon a Catholic retreat. The priest standing in the doorway greeted us warmly, assuring us that there were no Germans inside. He didn't have to tell us that, as we saw the last of them running into buildings skirting a small village a hundred yards away.

From the town an enemy tank fired upon us, hitting the walls of the retreat so that hunks of rock showered down upon us. We returned their fire with our guns and the shells from the mortar squad attached to us. From our rear, friendly artillery whistled over our heads and crashed into the town. The tank pulled back,



causing us no more trouble. In the meantime Adamczyk had come from company headquarters with the order to halt until the next day.

The priest invited us in, and though the platoon had to stay on the line in case the Germans attempted to counter-attack, I was at least able to move the command post under a roof for the first time. As Woody and I sat there in the twilight, I took the gun with the tempera-

mental trigger and threw it down beside me in disgust. "I'm getting myself another gun," I complained. "This damn' thing doesn't work."

He picked it up curiously. Suddenly it came to life, putting a neat hole in the wall about an inch from my head.

By morning the Germans were gone, and we moved through the town, crossing the German border a few kilometers beyond. Sergeant Eddie Fehrenbach was the first man in the First Division to cross the German border, in the woods this side of Aachen. Immediately afterward we ran into a few pillboxes and entrenchments, but they were not fully manned, and the enemy surrendered after a brief struggle.

Because of the situation, it was reasoned, and correctly, that each company should set up its own all-round defense.

Before nightfall both the Second and Third platoons had fought off determined enemy counter-attacks, and the First Platoon, defending the rear, had run into several German patrols attempting to cut off the company's communications with battalion headquarters.

Woody, while placing two of the squads, observed a German patrol sweeping in, and immediately set out after them, chasing them a hundred yards into a pillbox previously unnoticed by us in our advance. The Germans slammed the iron door, and phoned for mortar fire on the position. The next thing Woody knew, mortar shells had dropped down on his men, wounding two of them with the bursts.

After they had pulled back and communicated with me, we sent a couple of the tanks attached to the company in to clean out the pillbox. The Germans fought on until the last man had been killed.

In the meantime German artillery shells were bursting against the trees above us, showering us with hot metal. In some, but not all cases, the fragments had spent their force by the time they reached the ground; several of us were hit with no injury, but one man was badly wounded on the shoulder.

I noticed a soldier sitting on the ground outside his foxhole, in the midst of a rain of shells. He made no effort to move. "You'd better take cover," I called to him. He looked at me dully. He had lost his senses. I pulled him to safety and arranged for him to be sent to the rear.

I had lost four men in the Aachen forest; there were now ten men left of the forty that had started with me, while my platoon was down to twelve.

When we pulled out of there the next day, I received sixteen men as replacements, bringing the total in

the platoon to twenty-eight. Striking deeper into the Aachen salient, we drove southward toward the city of Stolberg, southeast of Aachen; the latter was as yet untaken.

THE atmosphere was entirely different now that we were in the enemy's home territory. No longer were there cheering crowds as we passed. For the most part the houses had white flags hanging from them, and the people, while obviously not welcoming us, offered no resistance. The fight appeared to have gone out of them, with the exception of the children, who hissed us as we went past. In one instance, several children, not one of them over seven years of age, had been picked up while firing on American troops.

Our next halt was at a little cross-roads village close to Aachen. The platoon command post was established in a tavern that had just been vacated, and we discovered with pleasure that the beer taps still worked.

Here we were separated from the other platoons, each of us holding an important road junction. Occasionally we were the target of artillery concentrations, and two of my men were hit, cutting the platoon to twenty-six.

Several times during the day it was necessary to halt German civilians who attempted to cross our lines. We must have been occupying a center of community life, for our road-blocks caused considerable consternation. Residents of the village stared at us in curiosity and fear from the security of their homes, and several of them timidly made overtures, but we kept strictly to business.


Suddenly Youngman saw a German soldier coming toward us on a bicycle. When called upon to surrender, the man jumped off his bicycle and started to run. Youngman fired, hitting him in the leg. There was a scream from one of the houses, and a woman came running out to the

wounded man. It was her husband. That was one very unhappy German. He had been captured while on furlough!

Late in the afternoon a procession came up to me at platoon headquarters. It was led by the parish priest, who informed me that we were holding the only water supply of the village. Although it was contrary to instructions, I allowed them, accompanied by several of my men, to enter the lines to take water from the well.

Moving out again in the morning, we safely passed through an artillery barrage as we entered the second belt of defenses along the Siegfried Line. These pillboxes were for the most part empty, and the Germans holding the terrain alongside them surrendered after a brief fight. In questioning our prisoners we discovered the reason they had not used their pillboxes—simply the unbearably painful effect of artillery-shell concussion on their eardrums while inside them.

The area was now clear of the enemy; and American tanks, ahead of us about a hundred yards, were going into the outskirts of Stolberg. The Germans who had not been taken in our assault on the pillboxes had fled into the woods across the road



A strong force attempted to cut the platoon off from Atkinson's platoon by coming in alongside.

from us. Then I noticed movement coming in from my left front. Sergeant Koon shouted: "Those aren't our tanks!"

The German tanks were on top of us almost immediately. I had had two of my squads temporarily in one pillbox while the first squad under Fehrenbach was some distance on the other side of the road. The tanks had already overwhelmed his men and were now within fifty yards of us. Koon and I dived into the pillbox and slammed the iron door.

One tank stopped within twenty-five yards, and started to open fire upon armor to the rear of us, at the same time spraying the door of the pillbox with machine-gun fire. Then three other tanks moved beyond to our rear, accompanied by infantry.

Having seen only Koon and me go into the pillbox, the enemy did not attempt to take us out or blow it up, but proceeded with the case at hand, which was to push their advantage and take the rest of the pillboxes held by other units.

They assaulted the other two platoons of the company, killing Lieutenant Skinner and his platoon sergeant, and destroying a total of five Sherman tanks attached to the company.

I decided that to break out of the pillbox would be suicidal at this point. There was still one tank just



I fired into the slit from which the machine gun protruded.

in front of us, which continued to fire over our heads, while spattering the door of the pillbox with machine-gun bullets. Through the peephole on the door, I could see the German infantry passing us. I decided to surrender in case the tank lowered the sights of its big gun, and passed the word to have white handkerchiefs ready.

Finally the tank moved off. Youngman and I waited a little while, and seeing no more movement, opened the door and stepped out cautiously, Woody covering us from the pillbox. The Germans had gone; but directly behind us were three blazing Sherman tanks, and to our right rear, two oth-

ers. Fehrenbach and his squad were gone.

Then we saw an American column coming toward us. I started toward them, but Woody pulled me back into the pillbox. "Hell, Beach!" he exclaimed. "They might be prisoners!"

THIS was good advice, so we waited until they came close. When I saw they were carrying rifles, I went out to greet them. They were men of Atkinson's platoon. Atkinson was relieved to see me.

"We thought the Germans had you!" he said.

"They got Fehrenbach," I told him. "But the rest of us are here."

Atkinson told me that the Germans had been beaten back by reserve forces, and had retreated.

We organized company lines as best we could, although my platoon was down to two squads, and Skinner's was without platoon leader or platoon sergeant. Captain Briggs assigned Woody as leader of the second platoon, and made Jake Lindsey platoon sergeant.

Before we moved out toward Stolberg, Sergeant Fallet became a casualty. "I decided I needed a squad leader more than a platoon guide, so I put Dyer in charge of Fallet's squad.

We had lost eight men. Three of those were originally with me in Nor-

mandy; leaving only seven of the forty. I had nineteen men all told.

Our next objective was Munsterbusch, a suburb of Stolberg. Situated on a ridge, it faced the German-held portions of Stolberg, while to our right was a high hill, still in the hands of the Germans, which gave them the opportunity of counter-attacking as soon as we had advanced, piercing A Company to our right, and coming down on us.

I had the second squad across the street, parallel to the ridge, while the third squad defended the approaches up the ridge. Smashing forward, the tanks moved in between us and the second squad, and before long German sharpshooters had got between the platoon C.P. and the third squad. There was also a constant rain of shells coming in between me and the third squad, effectively cutting me off from Sergeant Koon.

I moved over to the machine gunners attached to me at the platoon command post. After instructing them to fire on the sharpshooters now attempting to infiltrate between me and Koon, I turned away, and dived for the ground as several shells came over, landing between me and the machine gunners, killing one of them and burying the other in his foxhole. I reached for my helmet, which had been torn from my head. It looked like a sieve. The machine gun was permanently out of commission. The surviving machine gunner and I ran through the shell-swept field to a place of safety in the basement of the house I was using as a C.P.

Dyer, in charge of the second squad across the street, had placed his men in a couple of buildings, and they were keeping the infantry back, although the tanks had broken through.

The Germans also assaulted up the slope toward the third squad, setting machine guns in place and spraying the area, while dropping rounds of light mortars all around the holes of the men. A strong force then attempted to cut the platoon off from Atkinson's platoon by coming in alongside, and taking the buildings to the rear of us. One man was fatally wounded coming across enemy fire to platoon headquarters to warn me of the German attack. As I pulled him back, a bullet hit the magazine of my Tommy gun and lodged inside. But none of the rounds exploded.

Another man was seriously wounded almost immediately after that when the artillery again began to pound the area. Donald B. Grove, platoon medic, ran out into the barrage to administer to him. Though a shell fragment tore through Grove's clothes and took some flesh along with it, he took care of his man in the midst of the artillery fire, and pulled him back to safety.

The company was not only surrounded, but practically split in two by the oncoming Germans. Four of the five tanks attached to the company were put out of commission. The fifth tank pulled out of the line of fire behind a stone building, and, by brilliant maneuvering, succeeded in knocking out the enemy tanks one by one until finally the Germans withdrew, leaving snipers in houses that could control the street. We had to seek them out room by room.

The commander of the surviving tank received a field commission for his action.

When things had quieted down, I was able to send Grove and the wounded men to the rear. Grove was back by nightfall, but the others had been evacuated. There were now only six men left of the original forty, and platoon strength was down to fifteen. The machine gunner, who was from D Company, was not included in my total.

FORWARD movement was now stopped due to the lack of gasoline, and we were to remain at Munsterbusch for the next six weeks.

During the next few days other elements of the battalion began to report men missing from their posts. The mystery was cleared up when it was discovered that the town was honeycombed with tunnels, through which the Germans had been sending patrols to pick up prisoners. What tunnels we could find were blown up, but we had no assurance that we had not overlooked any of them.

As the Eighteenth and Twenty-sixth regiments began to contest the city of Aachen, the Germans, having fiercely but unsuccessfully attacked us, transferred their effort there. For a time our area, although separated from the enemy by only about twenty-five yards, experienced a sort of calm, broken only by occasional mortars.

Being so close to the enemy presented one particular problem: We attracted fire any time the telephones connecting our outposts with platoon headquarters were used. Finally Grove, the medic, suggested using 60-millimeter mortar cases, lined with cotton, to mask the sounds of voices while using the phone. This proved so successful it was used by other units of the battalion.

Replacements were coming in to compensate for our losses during the recent German attacks, and soon I had forty-four men under my command. Dyer went back to his job as platoon guide.

In front of us, down a slope, a group of houses was held by the enemy. Occasionally they fired on our outposts, and in reply, we brought our bazookas forward and sent rockets down on them. We set fire to two of

the houses in this way, but the others were out of the short range of the bazooka.

Immediately to the left of these houses was an unoccupied carpet factory, which higher headquarters decided should be held as an outpost. The three rifle platoons of Charlie Company were to take turns occupying it.

We could not move directly to the factory from our lines, since enemy fire would cut down anyone who passed our outposts. This meant taking a circuitous route, and that only during darkness.

Youngman led the first squad into the factory without incident, as the Germans had not thought to occupy it. During the daytime, these forces could look down the throats of the enemy, and could disrupt any movement between the houses they held. The squad in the factory could not move outside during daytime, as they were in an unenviable position—in the middle of the German line.

The Germans made several attempts to take the factory the next day, but without result, there being only a few easily guarded entrances. On the other hand, there was no way for our forces to retreat if the assault became too heavy.

The interchange of squads continued nightly, with each squad happy to be relieved; and at times there were skirmishes with the enemy, although the Germans inflicted no casualties. After we had sown the area with a good many anti-personnel and anti-tank mines, which could be covered from the factory, the place became more secure; but then the Germans discovered the location of the mines.

After the enemy had shelled the factory continually, giving it the appearance of a Swiss cheese, it became apparent to all of us that the building, so rapidly becoming untenable, could be assaulted and taken by the Germans in a matter of days.

A WEEK later, the enemy sent a strong patrol into the factory during the night. One of my new men, hearing a noise, called out: "Who's there?" He was killed by an answering burst of machine-gun fire.

That was enough for Atkinson, Woody and me. After talking things over with Captain Briggs, we decided on a plan of action, since it was obvious that we would have to occupy that miserable building as long as it was standing.

The next day a fire of undetermined origin completely destroyed the factory, and within a week we were relieved.

From the 1st to the 8th of November we remained in the rear, preparing for our next attack. This time we were to go through the Huertgen

Forest to Hamich, toward the city of Duren, and from there to Cologne.

For several days we occupied the woods near the town of Schevenhutte, a few thousand yards from Stolberg. In the meantime, Youngman had been made acting First Sergeant of the company, the incumbent having become a casualty. Dyer was now platoon sergeant, and Koon platoon guide. Adamczyk, Pratt, and Grove were the others remaining from the original forty.

The weather was the worst we had experienced since Normandy. Trench-foot attacked many, and provision was finally made to allow one platoon at a time to move into the town to dry out. The inclement weather delayed the attack for several days, until the 16th of November.

IN the many artillery barrages during our stay in the woods, we lost four men: one was killed, one wounded, and two were cases of combat fatigue who had to be sent to the rear. An additional three were victims of trench-foot. The platoon was down to thirty-six men.

Two squads of machine gunners from D Company were attached to me for the attack. I therefore had fifty-six men under my command as we stood at the jump-off line. To my left was Jim Wood.

Our orders were to move out at exactly 08:30, no matter what occurred. At 08:15 the enemy began to fire artillery, killing one man and wounding another. When we moved out at 08:30, we left them behind to be picked up by the medics.

Harassed constantly by artillery, we moved forward, the shriek of shells and the loud crack as they exploded over our heads acting as a sort of devil's serenade. My squad leader fell, his shoulder pierced by a fragment. The compass I was carrying to guide me through the woods was knocked from my hand. I called the assistant squad leader forward, and told him to take charge of the men.

Having nothing to guide me, I moved forward by dead reckoning, attempting to follow the edge of the forest to my right. The shells rained down like hail, and two more men fell. I could do nothing for them, other than discerning that they were still alive; I had to continue. Then Koon, who had been in the rear with the supporting squad, came up and reported that he was the sole survivor. The rest of his squad had been either killed or wounded by shell-fire. Dyer, with the other front squad to my left, had been lucky so far, having lost not one man.

We came to the enemy's barbed-wire entanglements. A machine gun fired on us, hitting a man in the throat. The fire came from a small

gorge to our right. I saw an earthen emplacement; from it the machine gun was spitting death at us. The whole line had now stopped; Woody could not bring his platoon forward until the gun was knocked out.

I fired into the slit from which the machine gun protruded, while Strickland, now acting leader of the right squad, commenced to lay down fire and to send over anti-tank grenades.

A few well-placed grenades fell inside the open top of the machine-gun nest, killing most of the crew. The two surviving Germans immediately jumped up, their hands in the air.

We disarmed them and sent them to the rear, making sure that the machine gun could not be used again. A second machine-gun emplacement met us as we moved forward, but we were too close for them effectively to stop us, and took it by direct assault, killing one man, wounding another, and taking the remaining two as prisoners. We were now coming out of the woods toward a group of buildings, Woody's objective. He had come up with his platoon, and we conferred briefly.

"All right, Beach. Here's where I leave you," he said. "See you later." We did not suspect that our next meeting would take place three months later, in a German prison camp. I swung over to the right, and counted my men before continuing to advance. It didn't take long to add up the fourteen who were left out of the fifty-six I had started with a few hours before. Dyer, Grove, and Adamczyk were still with me. Koon was gone.

"According to the map—" I was saying, when Dyer interrupted me.

"There's a Heinie," he observed briefly. A German was rushing toward us with fixed bayonet. As Dyer stood up, one of the men behind us, who had already taken aim, shot the enemy dead within two feet of us. I looked down at the map again, calloused, and continued:

"We haven't much farther to go."

DYER nodded. We moved across an open ditch to reach the final area. There I placed the fourteen men as best I could, before being called back to company headquarters. No sooner had I arrived there, than I received a frantic call that the Germans were counter-attacking. I rushed back to my position.

The Germans had pushed back one squad, killing four men, who lay in the area they were holding. Strickland was out there, wounded. Dyer was holding out with the remaining eight men. Suddenly there came a particularly heavy burst of enemy fire from his direction. "Dyer!" I screamed. There was no answer. . . .

A German in front of me began waving a white flag. I stood up, and was greeted by a burst of machine-gun fire which hit both legs. I fell, paralyzed. The Germans swept over me.

THE rest of the story comes from those I have questioned, Woody and a few other men in prison camp, and some that I met in American hospitals after liberation.

There was hell the next few days in the Huertgen Forest. The Germans counter-attacked seven times on the 16th of November, and were beaten off each time. The enemy kept up artillery barrages constantly. Captain Briggs was killed by a shell fragment after he had stepped out of his place of safety to reestablish communication with the battalion. Grove was hit in the shoulder in the same barrage.

Woody, with forty German prisoners, pulled out of the town he had taken, and was immediately given the remains of my platoon, now down to four men. He and Pratt were captured a week later. Youngman was also a casualty, having gone down in a blaze of glory, his hands tightly clutched around the throat of an enemy he had killed with his bare hands. Of the First Platoon when I took over on June 22, 1944, Adamczyk was the only man left.

As for Charlie Company, there were only thirty men left, after the Huertgen Forest, out of a hundred and seventy. Not more than ten of the survivors were men who had started in Normandy.

It was a new company that saw action the rest of the way and took part in the occupation of Germany. And though there will undoubtedly always be a C Company in the Sixteenth Infantry Regiment, it won't be Charlie Company.

For Charlie Company was dead.

I am glad to report that, to the best of my knowledge, Fallet, Youngman, Dyer, Koon, Fehrenbach, Rumadge, Grove, Pratt, and Strickland are all safe today. They were not among the fifteen or more who were killed during the five months I had the First Platoon. It is a matter of satisfaction, also, that every case of combat fatigue in the platoon recovered, due to the excellence of American medical officers.

As for Woody, I feel that I can never quite repay him for his genuine kindness toward me while I was still suffering from my injuries in prison camp.

Though miles and time may separate those of us who fought together that summer and fall of 1944, I know that the mention of any of their names will always bring back lively recollections of Dagwood Red Charlie—One and pride in the teamwork it represented during days of bitter combat.

ONE of the oddest incidents in the annals of aeronautics occurred seventy-three years ago, in the infancy of the science; but what makes it positively bizarre is its aftermath. To this day, on some radio program or in print, some mention will be made of the "terrible fight for survival in the wicker basket." "What would be your verdict," the announcer or writer generally wants to know, "if you were on a jury and Professor Donaldson had been brought before you on murder charges?"

To begin at the beginning:

It was the afternoon of July 15, 1875, in Dearborn Park, Chicago. Half the Windy City's populace had gathered, despite threatening clouds. The attraction was a balloon.

Two men climbed into the basket section of this sensational invention which could lift men into the sky. One was a tanned, stern-jawed adventurer, Prof. Washington Donaldson, and the other was a young cub reporter, Newton S. Grimwood—at first described by his fellow scribes as husky and stubborn, but when it became apparent that he was something of a *cause célèbre* in an epic tragedy, he was thereafter referred to as "sleender and white-faced."

It was more than just a coincidence that the man who estimated how often suckers were born happened to be in Chicago at that time. In fact, he had a show in a downtown arena and guess what the name of the balloon, visible in large letters, happened to be? Yep, P. T. BARNUM.

In fact, one of the papers stated later that when a spectator, cognizant of the foul weather, called out to Donaldson that he was glad he wasn't going up, the Professor, who had quite a reputation as a soldier of fortune who had had several close calls with balloons and had taken them in stride, replied somberly he wished he didn't have to go himself, the implication being that the balloon was making its ascension not so much as a scientific endeavor or an adventurous lark but as a cold-blooded advertising proposition.

Be that as it may, the balloon did ascend and disappeared into gathering darkness over Lake Michigan.

Roaring winds of hurricane proportions suddenly loosed themselves on the lake—and the "P. T. Barnum" did not come down on schedule.

A Captain Anderssen, skipper of a small craft employed in hauling tank-bark, reported seeing the balloon floundering badly and apparently about to crash into the sea. He gave orders for his boat to go to the rescue, but just as the balloon was about to strike the water an object came hurtling out of the basket and the balloon promptly rose again.

The Basket of Death

The weird story of a balloon that vanished, causing a national scandal.

by HAROLD
HELPER

Days went by—and then weeks—and nothing was heard concerning the balloon. Every few hours there were more rumors and more speculation—but no daring Professor, no cub reporter and no balloon.

Then, almost a month to the day after the balloon had made its ascension, a body was washed up on the shores of the lake. It turned out to be that of Newton S. Grimwood, the fledgling newspaperman.

A few days after that the most sensational news of all broke. It seemed an editor named Wilson, connected with an Ontario paper, was taking a trek through the Canadian woods when he came across what looked like the remains of a huge wicker basket and in the midst of this weird wreckage lay a man. His body was broken, his face was yellow and he was obviously close to death. With his last breath, he told this story:

He was Professor Donaldson. He had made a balloon ascension with a young reporter named Grimwood. They had been caught in a hurricane above Lake Michigan. To keep from crashing into the wild and roaring waters below, all the ballast had been thrown overboard. But still the balloon plunged toward disaster.

It soon became clear to both men that the only way for the balloon to stay aloft was for the weight of one of the men to be eliminated. One must die so that the other could survive.

"To me it was only a new element of danger—what I had confronted all my lifetime," the dying man declared. "I faced it quietly. To him it was an appalling strangeness; he sat cowering in the basket, his teeth chattering, his face livid, his hair blowing wildly in the wind—"

The Professor said he thought about drawing lots, but it came to him that the young journalist had neither the nerve to take the leap to his death nor the know-how to stay aloft in the balloon.

Then, in a flash, he remembered a passage from the works of the eminent legal authority, Blackstone, in which he had said that if two shipwrecked men found themselves on a plank in the sea and the sea could support but one, the stronger would be justified

in casting the weaker off as a matter of survival.

Surely, Donaldson reflected, the same analogy would hold true now.

While in the midst of this meditation, and as the balloon came hurtling closer and closer to its watery grave, the balloonist saw that the cowering journalist had drawn a deringer, a short-barreled pistol with a large bore, and was aiming it at him.

"All the instincts of self-preservation leaped to my muscles," the dying man recounted, "and it seemed to me but a single wave of my hand before Grimwood was falling toward the lake and the balloon started up above the storm. The scream of agony which the poor wretch trailed down to the water was horrible—horrible! I can hear it yet; but I do not regret what I did." With a last gasp, he said, "It was my life against his, and my life was the better of the two."

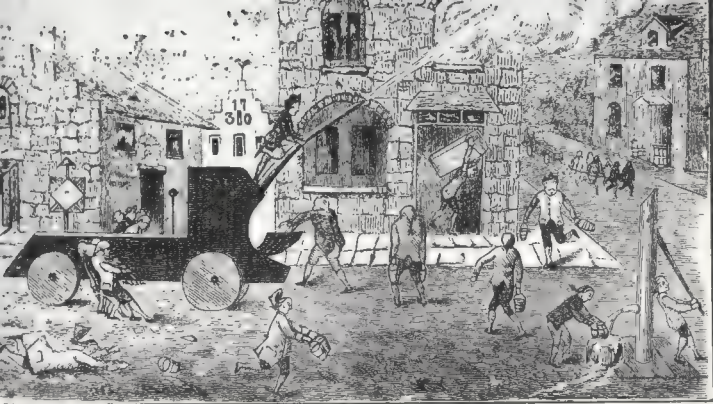
Now, as singular as was this report, there was something else just as singular. It appeared only in one newspaper, the Cincinnati *Times*, which concluded the account thus: "There is but one remark to add to the sad narrative, and that is the Italian proverb: *Ben trovato, sic non vero.*"

The Cincinnati *Times* that day sold like hot-cakes and papers all over the country picked it up and reprinted it. But the papers of Chicago, vortex of the drama, were a bit more cautious. They checked. They couldn't locate any editor named Wilson and there didn't seem to be any Canadian geographical names such as were mentioned in the Cincinnati *Times'* account. They branded the story as a "villainous hoax."

This the *Times* indignantly denied. It was true, the paper acknowledged, that the story was what you might call a figment of the imagination. But how could anyone say it was a "hoax"? Had not the article concluded with, *Ben trovato, sic non vero?*—or, "If not true, it is well put."

BUT apparently not many newspaper readers of that era were acquainted with the subtlety of Latin sayings (and not many editors, to judge from the number of papers that reprinted this account) and, although, as a matter of cold fact, the remains of the balloon and the Professor were never discovered and a life-preserver was found by the body of the cub reporter Grimwood, everyone talked about "the struggle for survival in the basket" and the moral and ethical implications involved.

To this day, the story still persists. All of which, no doubt, must provide a hearty chuckle for P. T. Barnum in whatever strata of afterlife he may be. When it came to a matter like the Cincinnati *Times'* "scoop," Mr. Barnum had a statistic for it.



New York's first fire engine in action, December 6, 1731. Primitive fire engines were invented in the 16th Century in Europe, and Boston used one in 1678. But the first really successful mobile engines were imported by New York from Richard Newsham in London.

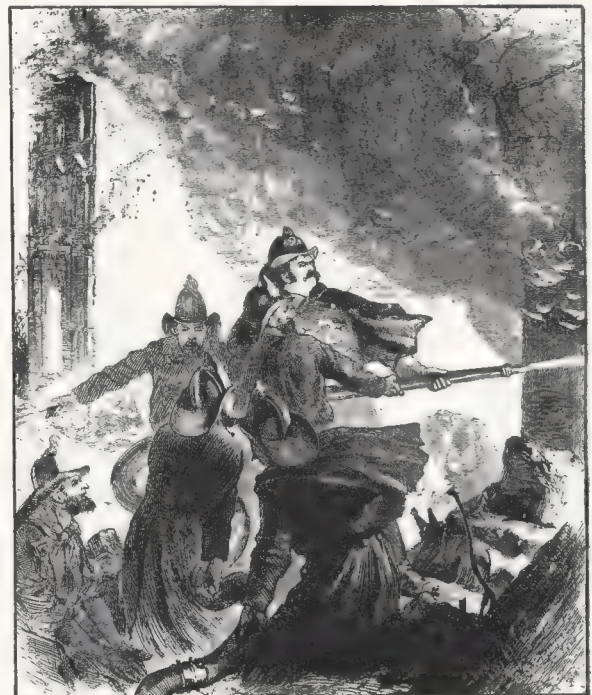
Fire!



Alexandria, Va., 1750. The watchmen sounded an alarm by sending forth a blast from a huge trumpet. Instead of billies they carried spontoons, something between a spear and a halberd.



Fire fighting in the 1860's. Silsby steam fire engine "Little Giant" on the way to a fire. Steam engines already had replaced hand-pumped machines, but still were drawn by manpower.

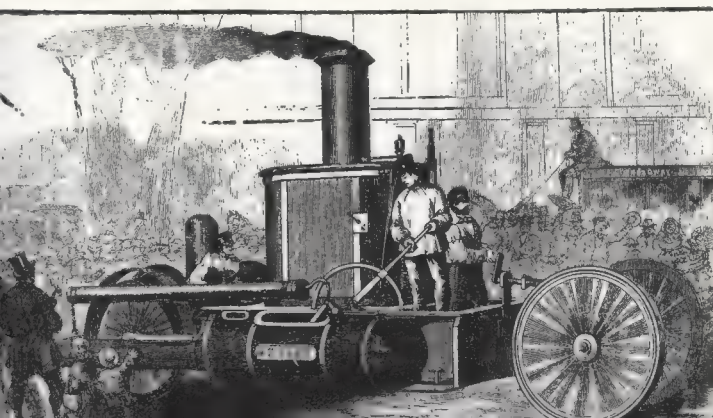


The great Boston fire of November 9, 1872. Nearly 800 buildings were destroyed, and the loss amounted to \$80,000,000.

At left: The great fire of New York. On December 16, 1835, a fire broke out which swept the first ward, east of Broadway and below Wall Street, destroying 674 buildings. The property destroyed was valued at more than \$20,000,000. Below: Burning of the Merchant Exchange. In foreground the mayor of New York and magistrates.



Below: A predecessor of the automobile fire engine of today! Trial of a self-propelling steam fire engine, from Bowling Green to 14th Street, New York City, November 5, 1858.



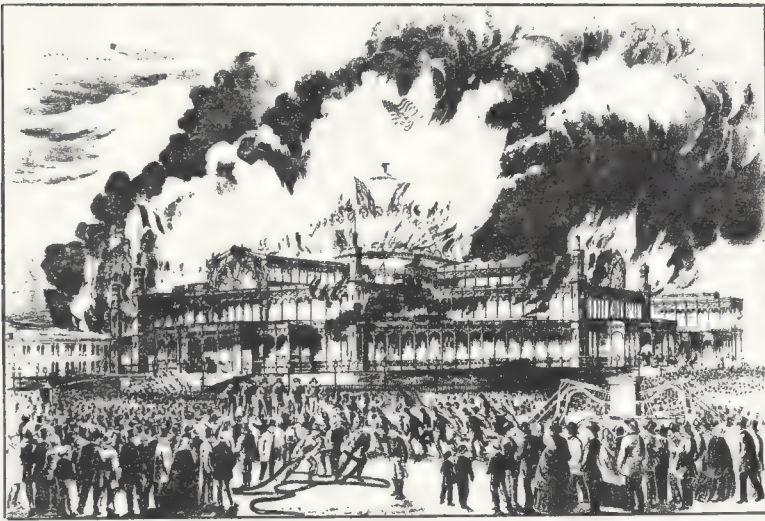


1854: Two fire companies racing for the honor to be "first at the fire." Sometimes the competition became bitter and a free-for-all fight followed—which didn't cool the fire!

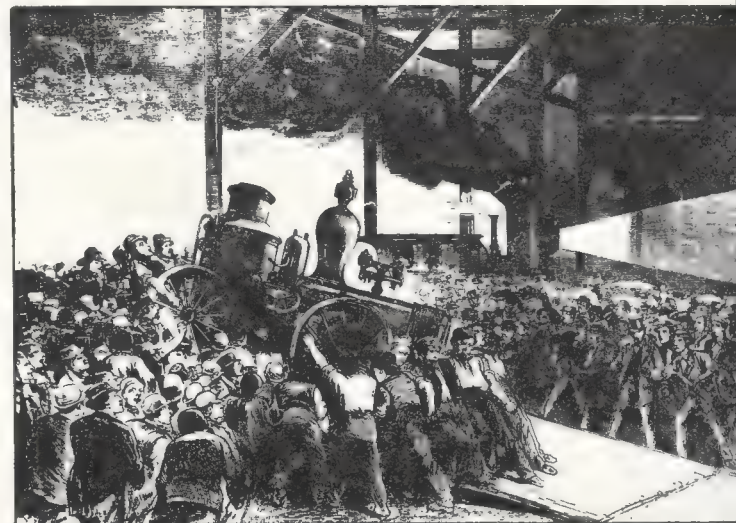


George Washington, had been a member of the Alexandria, Va., fire department since 1750; and in 1775 he purchased for eighty pounds a fire engine for the newly formed Friendship Fire Company of that city. The scene shows Washington arriving at a fire, only a few months before his death in 1799, and urging some complacent well-dressed onlookers to man the pump-handles.

Old prints from Three Lions, Schoenfeld Collection



Burning of the New York Crystal Palace, October 5, 1858. This spectacular fire left the splendid glass-roofed exhibition building a total loss.



Above: The great Boston fire, November 9, 1872. Arrival of the special train from Worcester, conveying the Worcester fire department, with steam fire engines, to the scene of disaster. At left: Chicago in flames, October 8, 1871. The terrified populace in front of the Briggs House, which has just caught fire. More than 3½ square miles burned down, destroying 17,450 buildings, killing 200 persons, with a loss of over \$200,000,000. Below: The rush for life over Randolph Street bridge. Survivors recall the strange awe-stricken silence of the people.



Operation Chin

WOMEN CAN AND DO WEAR TROUSERS, SMOKE TOBACCO, DRINK WHISKY—SOME OF THEM. HOW SOON WILL MEN PUT UP THE LAST UNCONQUERABLE BULWARK AND RAISE BEARDS IN DEFIANCE?

by WEBB GARRISON

*Illustrated by
Peter Wells*

STALWART American males of the not-so-long ago took for granted the weakness of the gentler sex. Woman, they said bluntly, was an inferior creature who should be treated as such. They permitted their womenfolk few privileges, no prerogatives.

As late as a century ago, Dr. Mary Walker, famous woman physician of Civil War days, ran afoul of the law when she appeared in public wearing a pair of trousers. She protested violently, and appealed to influential friends. But it took a special act of Congress to permit her the privilege of male attire!

Trouser-clad women have become commonplace. Forced to a defensive position, the male sex has relinquished its proprietary hold on tobacco, whisky and poker. One by one, the fields of politics, industry and sport have been invaded and conquered by damsels and dowagers. The modern American girl can and does do almost everything done by man.

Almost, but not quite. She can swim the English Channel, bob-sled in the Alps, and toss leather in Madison Square Garden. But the average lass can't grow whiskers. The chin, consequently, remains the last bulwark of defense of the masculine world.



Queen Victoria ordered every officer and enlisted man to grow a mustache.



Hair on the face—or the lack of it—has always been regarded as a major standard of virility. Diogenes, the Greek cynic who won fame by carrying about a lantern at midday searching for an honest man, was in the habit of going up to clean-shaven men and bluntly demanding whether they were male or female!

Meanwhile, Alexander the Great was just launching his attempt to subdue the world. No hidebound conservative, the Macedonian was constantly developing some new method of waging war. After pondering over the whisker situation, he executed a brilliant piece of strategy by commanding his soldiers to cut off their beards. The effect was immediately apparent in new victories. Enemy soldiers fought under a handicap, for in hand-to-hand conflict they were no longer able to seize the beard of a combatant with one hand, stab him with the other.

Alexander's short-whiskered soldiers overran the civilized world, but the razor did not immediately gain a chin-hold on the masses. Not until two centuries later was the practice of frequent shaving introduced. Scipio Africanus, greatest of the early Roman generals, instituted it. Had he not already won fame by defeating Hannibal, he might have been demoted—

to private, first class. Even as it was, he was regarded as sissy, for in ancient times man had no possession that he prized more highly than his whiskers.

Hebrew law prohibited one from so much as trimming the corners of his beard, but it was permissible to cut it off entirely as a sign of mourning. The Turks considered it a token of disgrace to have their beards cut, and foreign slaves were made to shave to signify their servitude. Wives kissed their husbands, not on the lips, but on the beard.

Persian kings were so proud of their whiskers that they plaited gold threads into them. Somewhat later, followers of Mohammed regarded his facial hair as sacred. A few such hairs have been preserved, and whether from his beard or mustache, are even yet known to the Mohammedan world as *Al Asaruf*, or The Sacred Relic. A huge mosque was built at Delhi to house a single hair from the beard of the Prophet!

More than one war has grown out of incidents in which whiskers figured. When Hanun, King of the Ammonites, was visited by ambassadors from King David, of Biblical fame, he seized them and had their long beards cut off even with the shoulders. Then he sent them back to their royal master. Seeing their clipped condition, David was so angry that he kept them in seclusion until their beards grew out again, then attacked Hanun. In avenging the whiskers, the Israelite king slew forty thousand of his enemy's fighting men.

Centuries later, by a single shave a French ruler precipitated a war that lasted three hundred years. Returning from the Crusades, Louis VII (who may have picked up parasites from the Moors) cut off his long curly beard. Queen Eleanor was not

only astonished at such an unheard-of procedure, but was also highly displeased by the shape of her husband's bare chin. Consequently she declared that she no longer loved him, and sued for divorce.

Along with her freedom, Eleanor regained title to two provinces that had belonged to her before marriage. Not long afterward, she married Henry II of England, and turned the lands over to him. The enraged Louis immediately declared war. The conflict began in 1152 and was waged intermittently without decisive settlement until the Battle of Rouen, in 1153.

Few men of the age would have been so foolhardy as to shave voluntarily. Early Saxon kings so prized their whiskers that the only trophy required of a defeated enemy was his beard. The victor had these trophies sewed to his coat. King Ryence, of North Wales, presented a particularly striking appearance on state occasions. His formal robe was ornamented by the beards of eleven kings whom he had conquered!

Not only nobles and rulers, but other men of prominence valued their beards only slightly less than their lives. John de Castro, of Portugal, borrowed the sum of one thousand pistoles and gave as security a single whisker. Much later, after Sir Thomas More had been convicted of treason and sentenced to have his head chopped off, the executioner placed him before the block and asked if he had a last request. "Yes," he begged, "wait till I put aside my beard, for that never committed treason!"



The only trophy required of a defeated enemy was his beard.

Like fashions in women's hats, the style of beard differed from year to year and century to century. In the age of Elizabeth, a man's beard denoted his occupation. Soldiers, judges, clergymen, merchants and other classes had distinctively trimmed whiskers. Womanlike, in the first year of her reign Queen Bess attempted to suppress beards by taxing their owners four shillings a year.

Later, during one of the periods when it was fashionable to shave, Peter the Great of Russia took up the custom. Not content to maltreat his own chin, Peter tried to force the razor upon his subjects. They resisted violently. The angry czar then ordered a tax of fifty rubles a year upon beards, and made it mandatory for bearded men to wear a particular type of clothing. Successive rulers confirmed his edicts for more than fifty years, but failed completely in their effort to trim whiskers off the chins of the Russian peasantry.

At various times smooth chins have been the fashion. Until quite recently such periods were always of short duration; and the beard has always made a come-back. But hair on the face was so rare among the Norman invaders of England that the famous William, ancestor of the Percy clan, was nicknamed *Asgernuns*, or *Oht les gernuns*—which is to say, "William with the mustaches." The epithet came to be used as a masculine name for all who wore the mustache. Changes in spelling over a period of centuries resulted in "Algernon"—the modern form of *Asgernuns*!

Unusually long whiskers have been the chief claim to fame of their proud owners. Johann Mayo, the German painter, is known to posterity as John the Bearded, from the fact that his beard touched the ground when he stood upright. George Killingworth, one of the four bearded diplomats sent by Queen Mary to the court of Ivan the Terrible boasted a thick crop of yellow whiskers five feet, two inches long. . . .

As a stripling, Valentine Tapley vowed that he would never shave if Lincoln became President. He was as good as his word, and at his death some sixty years later boasted a beard more than twelve feet long. Fearful lest



Intemperately long whiskers not only provide a tempting haven for vermin, but are positively dangerous.

vandals break into his grave to steal the precious whiskers, he left directions that his body be sealed into an unbreakable tomb.

Such fantastic excesses, as much as any other one factor, helped to turn public opinion against the beard. Intemperately long whiskers not only provide a tempting haven for vermin, but are positively dangerous. Burgomaster Hans Steininger, of Brunn, was immoderately proud of just such a beard. Ascending the staircase to the town council hall one autumn day, he forgot to fold up his whiskers. He stepped on them, tripped, and was killed by the fall.

MEN under the command of Robert E. Lee, during the Civil War, were in combat so constantly that they seldom shaved or trimmed their beards. Returning home after peace was made, their short-whiskered acquaintances ridiculed them. "Come out o' that bunch o' ha'r!" one might shout. "I know you're in thar! I see your ears a-workin'!"

Edmund Lear made fun of just such lusty males in his famous limerick:

There was an old man with a beard,
Who said: "It is just as I feared—
Two owls and a hen,
Four larks and a wren
Have all built their nests in my beard."

Widely differing motives have operated to induce individual males to preserve their symbol of masculinity,

facial hair. Many travelers in Arctic regions or the desert grow beards and mustaches before starting, in order to protect their faces from the onslaughts of windstorms and sandstorms. In all ages, the beard has been associated with wisdom. Consequently, many a public figure has cultivated whiskers for the sake of appearance.

Frédéric Chopin preferred a smooth chin; but in his day every musician was expected to cultivate a beard. The impish composer therefore shaved his left cheek, permitted whiskers to grow on his right—which was the only side ever turned to his audience!

Much later Chic Sale took to the stage in early youth, and decided a beard would make him appear more mature. Unable to grow his own whiskers, and not knowing where he could buy a false set, he pulled the stuffing out of a mattress and made himself a beard of horsehair.

And one MacKenzie, station agent at Mount Clemens, permitted his red beard to grow in order that his friend Thomas Edison might experiment with the hairs for use as lamp-bulb filament!

In only one instance has facial hair been made mandatory. The wearing of the mustache was optional in the English army for many years. Queen Victoria noticed that some soldiers wore it, others did not. Displeased at the lack of uniformity, she ordered every officer and enlisted man to grow a mustache.

Abraham Lincoln, whose bearded profile is familiar the world over, was clean-shaven until elected to the Presidency. A young admirer, Grace Bedell, wrote to him and suggested that he let his whiskers grow. He wisely adopted the idea, and the result was a striking change in his appearance. Some historians are inclined to believe

that the beard played an important part in Lincoln's sudden rise to popularity.

Be that as it may, partly in imitation of the chief executive, and partly as a result of the influence of be-whiskered Civil War generals, there followed an era in which every respectable male was expected to grow a beard, a mustache, or both.

But with the introduction of modern shaving devices, whiskers took the defensive. Quick-shave artists multiplied, and vied with one another for speed records. Robert Hardie, of Shepherd's Bush, England, once shaved six men in 1 minute and 29 seconds. He could shave any man, no matter how tough his beard, in twelve seconds. But to do the job blindfold, he required all of twenty-seven seconds!

Since the administration of Benjamin Harrison, the United States has not had a bearded chief executive. In recent times, few public figures have proved their puissance by their whiskers, Monty Woolley and George Bernard Shaw excepted. The handlebar mustache, long an essential qualification for major-league baseball, was last worn by John Titus, outfielder for the Phillies in 1912. . . .

Clarence Darrow, who has been blamed with almost everything else, played no small part in the betrayal of the beard. As a fledgling lawyer, beginning his career, he was opposed in court by a veteran attorney who frequently referred to him in a sneering manner as "that beardless youth."

The young barrister came back as follows: "My opponent seems to condemn me for not having a beard. Let me reply with a story. The King of Spain once dispatched a youthful nobleman as ambassador to the court of a neighboring ruler, who received him with the complaint: 'Does the

King of Spain lack men, that he sends me a beardless boy?' To which the envoy replied: 'Sire, if my King had supposed you imputed wisdom to a beard, he would have sent you a goat.'"

Darrow won the case, but it was hardly worth it. The incident was widely circulated, and whiskers never fully recovered from the blow. . . .

The amount of hair removed daily from the chins of American males is staggering in its proportions. The U. S. Department of Agriculture and the safety-razor people, after long investigation, emerged with the report that the average man has about three thousand hairs on his face. The greatest density, 750 hairs per square inch, is in the middle of the chin. The most sparse growth is on the lower cheek.

In the case of one who shaves each morning, the daily growth amounts to about 1/32 of an inch. This figure, multiplied by the number of individual hairs cut off, yields the startling fact that the average man shaves off about one hundred inches of hair each day, or more than a half mile every year.

Given forty million men of shaving age, it follows that some twenty million miles of hair are shaved off American mugs every year. Other considerations aside, the waste is positively appalling. A conservation program, *Save the Beard!* should be instituted at once. The genius who invents a method of salvaging whisker trimmings will not only make a fortune, but also put an end to the wool shortage. . . .

It is said that a beard does not grow on a woman's chin because her tongue would never let her jaw be still long enough to shave it. Regardless of whether or not this profound observation be entirely accurate, few women have been able to grow whiskers. (Madame de Staël was a notable exception; she had exactly five.)

Jealous because they could not themselves cultivate beards, early in historic times the fair sex began seeking to deprive the masculine world of them. By the time of Shakespeare, it was not unusual for a lass to complain: "Lord, I could not endure a husband with a beard on his face; I had rather lie in the woollen!"

AIDED and abetted by modern high-pressure advertising of shaving accessories, Operation *Chin* is now virtually completed. A vast quantity of facial hair, last remaining symbol of masculinity, goes down the drain every morning. The time is near when only an occasional mustache cup, gathering dust in Ye Olde Antique Shoppe, will remain as a nostalgic memento of a better day when men who were really men proved it by their whiskers!



Diogenes was in the habit of going up to clean-shaven men and bluntly demanding whether they were male or female.



The Returne of Marco Polo



From "The Firste Booke of Marcus Paulus Venetus... a gentleman of Venice, his Voyages." Here all illustrated for the sober historian by Peter Wells, an un-noted World Traveler & Flageolet fancier...



To supply a little more, delivered by tradition and recorded by Ramusio: he sayth that these three being comne to Venice, like Ulysses in Ithica, none knew them; all esteeming them long since dead.

Besides, their voyage had so altered them, that they seemed rather Tartarians then Venetians, having in manner forgotten their native Language;



their habite also was of thicke Clothe, like Tartars. They went to their house in Saint John Chrysotomes Street, and is there still to be seene, then a faire Palace, and now called the Court of millions: which name it had by reason of Marcos relations of so many millions in this worke, and in his discourses of the great Chans incredible wealth.

They found there inhabiting some of their Kindred, nor knew how to make themselves knowne. Therefore, as I have often heard of Magnifico Messer Gasparo Malipiero, a very old Gentleman of singular integrity, from the report of his father and Grandfather, &c. they agreed to invite



many of their kindred to a feast, prepared in honorable manner with much magnificence: in which at first all three came forth in Crimson Sattin sutes, and after the guests were set, stripped themselves, and gave them to the servitors, comming forth in Crimson Damaske; and

after in the common habit, giving still the former to the servitors. Dinner ended and the Servitors put forth, Marco brought forth their three habits of thicke Cloath in which they had comne home, and thence tooke an incredible quantitie of Jewels artificially sewed therein, which was no lesse marvell to the beholders, then evidence of their being of the Polo Family as they pretended. Maffio was made a magistratè in Venice, Marco was daily frequented with the youth; and all wonne great reputation.

In a few Moneths after... a fleete of Genoies attacked Venice... with seaventie Galleyes. Andrea Dandolo was sent against them, and in that Fleet Marco was made Captaine of a Galley, which by disadventure of Warre was taken and he carried prisoner to Genoa.



For the next 400 years, Marco was called the World's Champion Liar...

Snake River Jim

THE OLD MEDICINE SHOWMAN DEARLY LOVED
A BIT OF ADROIT RASCALITY IN A GOOD CAUSE—
AS WITNESS THIS ADVENTURE IN THE CATTLE
COUNTRY.

FUNDS were low again. Snake River Jim sighed audibly, conscious of the lack of weight in his money belt. His flowing mustaches drooped dispiritedly, a rueful twist on his lips.

"So help me, Maude," he said to the patiently plodding horse, "I'm about desperate! First thing you know, I'll be looking for work."

Maude turned her head, blinking lazily at the medicine man. She blew slack lips in sympathy, then looked ahead again.

Snake River Jim grinned.

"And if I do," he said grimly, "I'll sell you for glue."

Susie nickered, cocking one ear back, as though appraising the truth of the statement. Then, satisfied, she leaned into her harness, pacing Maude, and the medicine wagon began its climb of the slight hill.

"Giddap," Snake River Jim said unnecessarily, and clucked his tongue.

Red and gold paint glittered bravely on the medicine wagon. Alkali dust powdered it now, but a brush and water would work wonders when camp was made in Abilene. Then the side drop would come down and become a stage. Gaudy posters, alive with wondrous words and even more wonderous claims would hang from each end. Coal-oil torches would flame smokily, and Snake River Jim would stand to make his spiel, mustache and goatee blinding white, whiter hair reaching to his shoulders. His outfit would be pale gray, boots hand-stitched and immaculate, snake-skin vest creaking softly with each breath.

"Youth, that's what I sell," he would proclaim to the shifting crowd. "Youth, no matter what your chronological age! This, my friends, is Elixir of Life, compounded by northern Indians from thirty snake oils and seventeen herbs. It cures sour stomach, gout, headaches, boils, hives, falling hair. Used properly, it is beneficial to man or animal. Now who will be the first to—"

Snake River Jim sighed in memory. This was the life for him, broke or heeled, good weather or bad. Country passed beneath the wheels of his wagon, and people were friendly, and



sometimes a bit of skulduggery netted a fancy profit for a man with a natural bent for rascality.

He stopped his reverie, as the wagon topped the rise. Abilene lay ahead, sprawling in a natural depression, smoke rising from a dozen chimneys. Past the town, he could see the twin shining snakes of steel where the railroad was coming in. Men worked there, gandy-dancers jumping rail into place, mallet-men swinging their sledges with casual ease. Money was represented in those men; and for that, Snake River had brought his caravan wagon many weary miles.

"Pancho?" he called, not turning his head. "Pancho, you lazy devil, climb out of that bed."

A moment passed, then the heavy curtains parted behind his back, and a swarthy young face blinked sleepy eyes at the town.

"Si, Señor Jeem," he said. "It ees Abilene. *Mi padre* breeng me here many time when I'm a *muchacho*."

"So you've told me," Snake River Jim said, smiling at the youth's eager face.

"Ai, it ees the truth," Pancho stated. "*Mi padre* ees beeg man een Mejico, plenty big, you bet. He steal more cattle than anybody I know." He nodded, a shock of blue-black hair slanting over his forehead. "Some day, I be beeg like him!"

Snake River Jim frowned, but amusement lay deep in his bland eyes.

Turns Rustler

by WILBUR S. PEACOCK



"I'm figuring on running cattle," Snake River said. "You've no objections?"

"I catch you stealing anything, and I'll blister your seat," he said.

Pancho grinned unabashedly. "You catch me, is fine," he agreed.

Snake River Jim shook his head. "Enough of that," he said. "You get back and put on the Indian clothes and the paint. And mind you—" he finished, wagging a finger, "you don't talk this time. Why, back in Wayneville you almost got me hung for being a fraud."

"Is accident," Pancho grinned disarmingly. "She was wan pretty girl."

And he looked ahead speculatively. "Wonder is Panchita still in Abilene?"

"Git!" Snake River Jim ordered, and smiled into the sunlight when the boy was gone. Only three months had they been together, yet he felt a strangely paternal regard for the boy. Pancho had been almost starving when they met, and so the medicine show had taken on a new hand. But then, as the medicine man had decided, that had been good. Pancho made an excellent Running Wolf, son

of Chief Thunder Mountain, who had invented the wonderful Elixir of Life.

Not that anyone so mythical could claim such a distinction. Elixir of Life appeared when Snake River Jim ceased his stirring of water and alcohol and coloring and flavoring in a huge copper kettle. And it appeared often, for the mustached man was a master salesman, and his belief in the Elixir was a virtue of his sales talk.

"Sure, there's alcohol in it," he would admit. "And that's good. Alcohol kills bugs and worms and other terrible things. And it preserves; just let me show you the piece of beef I've had covered with Elixir the past ten years."

Snake River Jim nodded. Maybe he'd use that approach, once the show was set up. Abilene might go for something like that; and since there was a harvest of cash here, he might as well be the reaper.

"Giddap," he said to the plodding team, and softened a stogie between thumb and forefinger.

He lit the stogie, blowing smoke away, conscious of the weariness in his rangy body. He saw the adobe house to his left, and nodded to himself. That would be young Martin's home, for if his information was correct, young Martin and his wife lived in the only adobe this side of town.

He swung the team into the faint rut of a side road, figuring they'd take him to the house. He didn't need a road, of course; in fact, most of the time he traveled where roads were few and far between. Still, this was a wagon-track, and it apparently led to the house.

The wagon jounced, then went forward, the team laying into the harness. Behind, Pancho practiced a few war whoops. Snake River relaxed.

Maude reared, almost breaking the traces, and then Susie fought her harness.

"What the tarnation hell!" Snake River Jim said sharply, and sawed at the reins. "Get along, 'fore I give you a taste of whip."

He fought the team into position again, then sent it ahead. He looked



"Bob's in jail," she said. "Clem Brockley brought the Sheriff over this morning."

about, wondering what had spooked Maude and Susie, but found nothing. The ground was wind-swept sand, marred where coyotes had been digging. Except for a few bushes and stunted grass, there wasn't a sign of life.

Shaking his head in wonder at the vagaries of the plodding horses, he relaxed again, smoke spilling softly from his nostrils.

"*Que es?*" Pancho asked through the curtains.

"Nothing important," Snake River Jim answered. "Go on and get fixed up."

Minutes passed. A fence appeared, posts set deep, the single strand of wire a marking rather than a guard. Snake River Jim turned the team, following the fence-length, coming at last to the wide gate. Dismounting, he lifted the gate, then clucked the horses through. Swinging the gate to, he climbed onto the wagon seat again, and the wagon went lurching forward.

He could see the house clearly now, adobe neatly whitewashed, well-housing in back. To one side was a stable, beside it an open shed with

hay racks for milk stock. It was a nice little ranch, neat as a pin, exactly as young Martin's father had said it was.

Snake River Jim turned the team toward the house, and pulled it to a halt before the door.

"Hey, Martin—Bob Martin!" he called.

He saw the gun muzzle first. It came through the door crack, hesitating, deadly, and he felt hair stir on the back of his neck.

"Whoa!" he said. "It's me, Snake River Jim."

Then the door was swinging open, and a woman was running toward the wagon, rifle promptly put aside.

"Oh, Snake River!" she said aloud, and when he was at her side, she buried her face in his vest and began to cry.

THE spare old medicine showman blinked bewilderedly at the house, holding the girl tight. This was hardly the reception he had been expecting.

"Hey, now," he said, "nothing's as bad as all that. Where's Bob?"

Her face was tear-streaked as she lifted her head. "He's in jail," she said. "Oh, Snake River, what can we do!"

"Jail!" Snake River felt surprise touch him. "What's he in jail for?"

The girl pushed soft hair back from her cheek, regaining composure now, the first faint flicker of hope in her eyes.

"Rustling," she said. "Clem Brockley brought the Sheriff over this morning, and found four hides buried behind the shed. Brockley identified his brand. The Sheriff arrested Bob."

"He didn't do it?" Snake River Jim asked.

"Of course not," the girl flared. "You know Bob wouldn't do anything like that."

Snake River nodded. He had known what the answer to his question would be. Bob Martin was like his father, too honest, which was perhaps why neither was wealthy now, in a world where crookedness often flourished. And seeing the belief in the girl's eyes, he knew that Alice would never countenance any chicanery on her husband's part.

"*Que es?*" Pancho asked from the caravan wagon.

Alice cried out, clutching at Snake River Jim's arm, and he grinned reassuringly.

"It's only Pancho," he said. "He acts as an Indian in the show."

The apparition, striped with gleaming ochre and crimson and white paints, smiled with a flash of white teeth.

"Pancho Ricardo Jesus Achelata y Trujillo," he introduced himself. "You are very pretty, señora; the honor is mine."

Alice Martin smiled, despite herself. "Hello, Pancho," she said.

SNAKE RIVER JIM fumbled for a stogie. "Let's go into the house and talk a bit," he counseled.

"Of course," Alice agreed, and led the way.

Pancho followed, prancing a bit in his Indian breeches and coat of paint. Inside, Snake River found a chair and lit his stogie. Alice Martin pushed a teakettle onto the hot plate of the stove, and then sat at the table.

"We've had a hard time, Snake River," she said. "The drouth almost whipped us. We sank three wells before we reached good water. The stock died of some disease, leaving us only one milch cow. We were ready to pull out. Then the railroad began building this way, and Bob managed to borrow enough money to do quite a bit of restocking."

"Who from?" Snake River broke in.

"Clem Brockley; he owns the Rocking M—the big place just beyond our ranch."

Snake River Jim nodded, watching a smoke-layer in the still air. Already he had the pattern; times changed, but men and their greed did not.

"He wants the land," he said.

"That's right. Our note is due in three weeks." Distress lay in the girl's face.

Pancho grunted angrily. "We keel heem," he said fiercely. "Me, I gut-

shoot heem, like *mi padre* do anybody he don' like."

Snake River grinned. "We no 'keel' anybody," he said. "Now you hustle back to the wagon and take off that paint."

"*Pero, señor—*" Pancho began.

"Scat!" Snake River Jim watched the youth disappear through the doorway, then swung to the girl. "Brockley wants the land because the railroad is coming through, is that it?"

Alice nodded. "That's what Bob says." Tears beaded her eyes. "If we have to fight a court case of rustling, there won't be enough to pay the note, even selling everything."

"The note must be paid?"

The girl nodded. "Brockley said he wouldn't press us, but that was before the railroad started this way. Now he wants the money."

"Why, is he strapped for money?"

"Strapped!" The girl laughed wryly. "Didn't you see that stock on his ranch as you came here?"

"I saw two brands, one a Pitchfork and the other a Rocking M."

"The Rocking M is his; the Pitchfork is Ed Conley's brand. The Pitchfork stock is a big herd that he just bought from Conley a couple of days ago, and it hasn't been rebranded yet." She sighed. "Bob was planning on buying some of Conley's cattle this fall." Wry humor lay in her tone. "It's easy to change the Pitchfork to a Double H."

"Double H?"

"Yes, that's our brand. We bought rights to it along with the ranch."

Snake River Jim flicked ashes to the floor, eyes intent with thought. Absently, he lifted a gold-piece from his vest pocket; and it rolled and twisted, disappearing and reappearing with an incredible deftness in his gambler's fingers.

Frowning, he put away the coin and fumbled a pencil stub and piece of paper from his pocket. He drew a Pitchfork brand, three tines upward on a short handle. Then with two strokes, one at either side, he changed the brand to a Double H, which was three vertical lines crossed by a single bar. Slowly, a smile came to his eyes.

"I played cards with Tom Blackburn, down Laredo way," he said thoughtfully, "and damn me, if he didn't catch me cheating." He grinned at the girl. "You know what I did?" he finished. "I stuck two decks of marked cards in his pocket when he wasn't looking. By hooky, he was so busy explaining how they got there, he never did get around to accusing me of anything."

Alice Martin tried to smile, but there was no animation in her eyes. Hope was dying, even as Snake River Jim talked. She had known him since a little girl; she had tweaked his mus-

taches and played piggyback on his wide shoulders. She had come to trust him, even knowing the sly rascality of his mind. But now, seeing his white hair and mustaches, there lay in her a sense that he was old.

As though sensing her thoughts, the old showman cocked his cigar at an impudent angle and smiled from keen blue eyes.

"Want to sell the ranch?" he asked blandly.

"Why, and to whom?"

"Me." Snake River Jim reached for and found a silver dollar. "I figure I'll pay one dollar and other considerations."

Alice Martin shook her head bewilderedly. "But it doesn't make sense," she argued. "The ranch is worth a great deal more than a dollar; it is valuable. And what do you mean by 'considerations'?"

"A dollar," Snake River Jim said, keeping his smile. "And the ranch is not valuable, not right now. What do you say, Alice?"

Alice Martin watched the medicine man. There was a twinkle in his eyes, a gay mockery which came from thought and many years of risking everything on the fickle liking of fate. Slowly a smile touched her, and she nodded.

"I don't know what you intend to do, Snake River," she said, "but if Jim agrees, you've just bought a ranch."

"Do?" Snake River Jim blew out smoke lazily. "It's very simple. Since Mr. Clem Brockley is so touchy about his cattle, I figure on borrowing a few more."

"Rustling?" Alice asked in disbelief.

"Rustling," Snake River Jim said, and his piratical smile was keen and self-amused. "I figure on rustling enough of his stock to pay the mortgage."

His stomach muscles felt the limp weight of the money belt at his waist.

"And me for my time," he added thoughtfully.

They were smiling then, each at the other, a slim girl whose hands had helped her husband build a home, and a goateed gentle crook whose home was on wheels, its ceiling a vaulted sky.

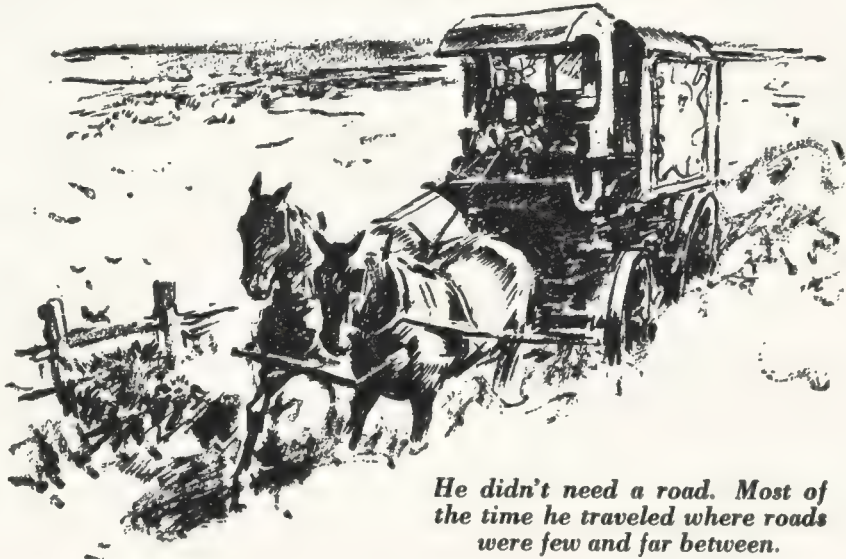
"Get paper and ink," Snake River said. "I might as well start being a ranch owner right now."

His long hands were very steady as they composed a bill of sale.

THE Palace Bar was very crowded and very noisy. Five bartenders worked behind the bar, sweat running their faces, glasses filling and emptying with a monotonous regularity. A piano sounded off-key at the rear, and heavy-footed dancers vied with each other for the favors of the girls. Stud poker progressed at a rear table, and to one side dice rattled in bright clicks of sound against a table back.

Snake River Jim nursed a long drink as he sat at a side table. His long hair was little whiter than the wide Stetson, and his trousers and shirt were dove gray, trouser legs poked into boots polished satiny black, the stitching brilliant white by contrast.

Rattlesnake rattles chattered ominously as he moved, serving as buttons on his vest; and each scale of the vest gleamed like a jewel, reflecting light.



He didn't need a road. Most of the time he traveled where roads were few and far between.



"There are those whom I do not wish to meet, for various reasons."

He drank unhurriedly, brushing back the white glory of his mustaches. Three nights, now, had he waited in the saloon for Clem Brockley to make his move; and a smile gently curved his lips when he saw the brawny rancher coming along the bar, purpose in his face.

"You're Snake River, I take it," Brockley said truculently, stopping near the showman's table.

"I'm Snake River, and you can take it," the old showman said quietly. "What's on your mind, Brockley?"

"You know me?" There was no surprise in the man's tone.

"Why shouldn't I?" Snake River countered. "You're the *hombre* who got young Martin put in jail." He set the glass down. "Yes, I've heard of you; and now, meeting you, I can't say any pleasure is mine."

CLEM BROCKLEY grinned and he moved closer. "You crow big, for an old rooster," he said. "Now, what's the play about your buying Martin's ranch?"

Snake River patted the music's rhythm with a boot toe. "I'm figuring on running cattle," he said. "You have no objections?"

He watched Brockley's beefy face, not liking it. There was greed there, marked in the faint lines about the mouth. His eyes were hard, as he measured the cattleman for a brief moment.

"I hold a note due in a couple of weeks; Martin tell you about that?" Brockley countered.

"That, and a lot more. Like how sort of tidy the scheme was, you and the Sheriff coming in, and you knowing right where the hides had been buried, and the railroad cook admitting he'd bought three beeves from Martin early in the morning. Kind of tidy, I must admit."

Clem Brockley grinned. "I'm a neat man," he admitted.

"Neat man can forget to dust corners," Snake River said dryly.

"All right," Brockley said, and suddenly there was no humor in his tone, "let's quit beating the brush. What do you want for the ranch?"

"You misunderstand me," Snake River Jim said. "I intend to run cattle."

Brockley stared silently, then built a cigarette and lit it. "The place is worth ten thousand," he said at last. "I hold a note for five; I'll give another five, and withdraw the charge against Martin. Is that fair enough?"

"That's fine," Snake River said pleasantly. "Except you're forgetting a couple of things: First, you've made a charge against Martin which will ruin him in a cattle country. Secondly, the ranch isn't worth ten thou-

sand; it's worth twenty. And third, I intend to run cattle for a time."

He leaned forward then, and suddenly he was no longer old; he was keen and dangerous, and his tone slapped the other like a flail.

"I don't like you, Brockley," he said quietly. "Crooks I can stand, but not your type. You're a sneak, and I don't like sneaks. Good night."

He came from his chair, tipped his hat with grave courtesy, and walked placidly through the crowd to the door. Nerves crawled a bit in his back; how much pressure Brockley could take, he did not know. He might have crowded the man too far.

Then a soft sigh of relief touched his throat, and he was outside, walking along in the moonlight.

He grinned, remembering the encounter. It had had the right touch, the keen slash for which he had sought. Brockley would hate him now, as he had hated Martin. He would be cooking up various schemes for revenge. And Snake River Jim had learned long before that an angry man, a violent man, is a vulnerable man.

He rolled and lit a fresh stogie. Men walked the streets, carousing, spending their money with reckless abandon. Barkers shouted from before the doors of the saloons, and torches flared with flickering smoky brilliance. This was a perfect setup for a medicine show, and keen regret touched him that he was not here, plucking profits with consummate ease.

Loneliness touched Snake River, too. Pancho had been gone five days

now, and he missed the larcenous little Mexican. He should have returned by now, but evidently something had detained him.

He saw the Sheriff, riding by on his gray mount. The man nodded briefly, bold eyes watching for the moment, then swinging away. He at least had not been mixed up in Bob Martin's downfall, other than through making a lawful arrest. He was a hard man, a tough man, but he was honest.

Snake River Jim held no rancor against him; he was but doing his job. He watched the other go along the street, then swung right and entered the stable.

"Señor Jeem!" Pancho said quietly from the stall nearest the door.

"Pancho, damn your hide!" Snake River said, and his eyes came alive with liking. "What kept you?"

The boy grinned with a flashing of white teeth. "*Mi padre* was in jail. Take some time to get heem out."

Snake River smiled. "But you brought him back?"

"Ah, sí. Ees here." He swung about. "*Padre mio*, come here."

A shadow moved and resolved into a man. Silver coins glinted at hat-band and belt, spurs jingled musically. A dark mustache striped a swarthy face.

"Ees a pleasure, señor," Pancho's father said ceremoniously. "I am Ricardo."

Snake River extended his hand, eyes searching the other's face. Instinctively he liked the man, and the feeling lay in his handclasp. Easily, he spoke in Spanish.

"Your son has told me much of you, Ricardo," he said.

"As he speaks of you," Ricardo answered. He straightened, apparently

having asked and answered some question in his mind. "Otherwise," he finished, "I would not have ridden so hard from Mejico."

Pancho wriggled in anticipation. "*Mi padre* promise to gutshoot Señor Brockley," he said. "You no have done it already?"

"Not yet," Snake River admitted in quiet amusement, then sobered. "Where's your horses?" he inquired. "We can talk on the way out to the house."

"Outside, in back," Ricardo said. "We waited here for you, when we found your horse here." He smiled, and he was but an older edition of Pancho. "There are those here whom I do not wish to meet, for various reasons."

Snake River laughed aloud. This was a man he could like, a rascal cut almost to his own measure.

"I'll meet you on the main road," he said, and watched them turn and leave.

Saddling up, he whistled cheerfully, then rode from the stable, ducking low to clear the lintel.

He turned for one last look at the town. Men still milled aimlessly on the streets, and the Sheriff was a grim shadow riding the length of Main. Lights flared, and the tinny echoes of music welled at him. He sighed; it was a good town.

Turning, he spurred his horse to meet the two who waited. . . .

The sky was an inverted bowl of ebony, stars like diamond chips twinkling close at hand. A three-quarter moon was lifting slowly over the hills; and far away, Abilene displayed her spangles like some girl on a stage, enticing men to her rendezvous.

Two men and a boy rode a rutted trail toward the Rocking M, Snake River Jim in the fore, the swarthy Ricardo and his son trailing behind. Snake River smoked placidly, riding with an ease born of years of range work as a young man.

"Now don't forget," he called back. "We don't want the herd; cut out the young stock we talked about. I want no slips."

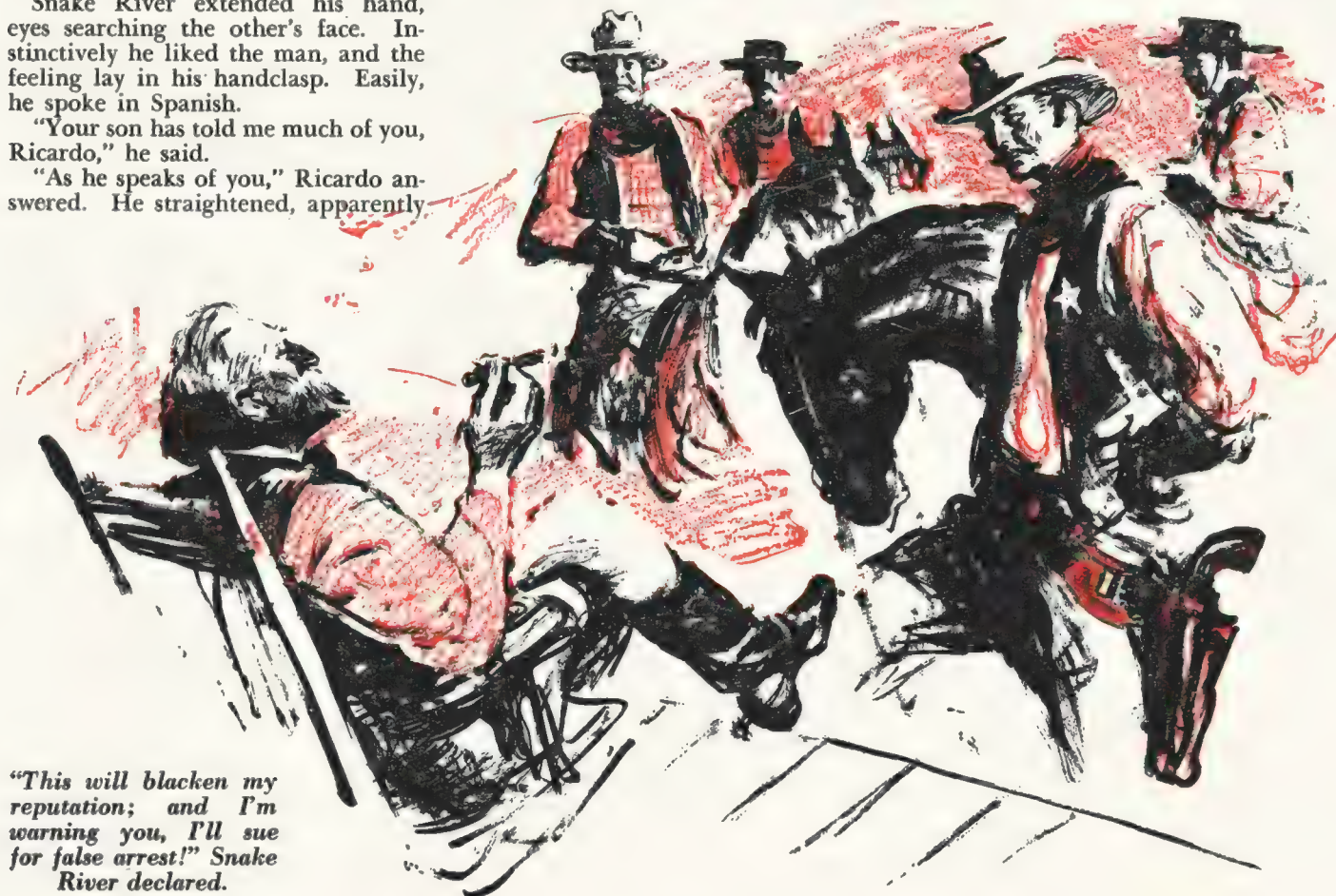
"Sí!" Ricardo answered, and continued his soft humming.

Pancho sighed. "Why, I no carry gun like you?" he asked plaintively. "Comes trouble, you need me, *no es verdad?*"

Snake River grinned into the darkness. "You swing a rope, Pancho," he said. "Ricardo and I will handle this." His head swiveled toward the older Mexican. "No gunplay, *sabe?*"

"Sí!" Ricardo spat thoughtfully. They rode quietly for a few minutes; then Snake River slowed his horse, stopping it at the edge of a chaparral clump. "Take over," he said. "One night-rider is all there is. I'll wait for your hail."

He relaxed, watching the two ride along the road, then drop into a



"This will blacken my reputation; and I'm warning you, I'll sue for false arrest!" Snake River declared.



"Now don't forget. We don't want the herd; cut out the young stock. I want no slips."

slight draw. A quarter-mile away, cattle lowed softly, sleepily, not completely settled yet for the night. These were Rocking M and Pitchfork cattle, night-herded by one man, some waiting shipment to Eastern markets, others waiting for sale to nearby ranchers and to the railroad.

Moonlight silvered the land, etching inky shadows, creating grotesque monsters from the brush and trees. Somewhere a coyote keened weirdly at the moon; and overhead, a fringe-winged owl swooped on a deadly foray.

A sudden startled cry came across the land, followed by a signaling yell. Snake River nodded, then lifted the horse into a trot. He rode swiftly, coming at last to the herd, seeing Ricardo and Pancho riding slowly through it, hazing young beeves into the clear.

He followed the edge of the herd, coming at last to where the night-rider lay with arms and legs firmly bound. Looking down, he laughed aloud, conscious that the man glared hate, then turned his horse and rode away.

"Ees enough, señor?" Ricardo said, rope-driving a knobby-kneed calf into a small herd held by Pancho.

"Plenty," Snake River Jim agreed. He chuckled. "Brockley is going to blow up," he finished. "Now, let's ride."

They hazed the reluctant cattle into movement, driving them across the plain and toward the Martin ranch. Ricardo lit a cigarette, his dark face almost black in the match's glow.

"A shame to take only twenty," he said thoughtfully. "Next time, I breeng my men and take them all."

"Sure," Pancho agreed. "We steal everytheeng, you betcha."

Snake River Jim smiled at the two. "I've no objections," he admitted. "But that will have to wait. Meanwhile, I'll head back to the house. *Vaya usted con Dios.*"

He lifted his hat and spurred the horse into a run. A whistle lay on his mobile mouth, gay and lilting, and he liked the rush of night air in his face. The night's episode had gone without a hitch. Come morning, Clem Brockley would be the angriest man in the country.

He was grinning, almost laughing aloud, as he unsaddled and turned the horse loose in the small corral. He chuckled as he told of the foray to Alice Martin; and later he lay sleepless on his bed, ideas running

through his mind. Then satisfied, he rolled over and slept the untroubled slumber of a man whose conscience is clear.

THEY came early in the morning, Brockley so pale with muted rage his sunburn was like a patina of rusty paint, the Sheriff cold and emotionless, only a faint shadow of curiosity in his eyes to tell his thoughts.

"There he is—arrest him!" Brockley shouted at sight of the old showman.

"What's wrong, Sheriff?" Snake River Jim asked pleasantly, ignoring Brockley.

He watched the men dismount, still rocking gently in his porch chair. He knew Alice Martin watched from inside the house, but she would not appear, for he had given her clear instructions as to that point.

"You know damned well what's wrong, you thieving rustler!" Brockley cried. "Oh, you weren't so clever; my night-rider recognized you."

"Recognize me?" Snake River Jim asked puzzledly.

The Sheriff came to the porch, bracing one boot on the step and tilting his shoulders against a pillar. His eyes were keen, and his hand was

close to his gun. Snake River watched placidly but questioningly, not ceasing his rocking.

"Seems as how," the Sheriff said. "Anyway, twenty head of cattle were rustled from Brockley's spread last night."

"And you think I did it?" Snake River Jim asked in surprise. "Surely you are joking."

The Sheriff shook his head. "It's no joke, Snake River," he said quietly. "The stock stolen was from the new bunch Brockley bought from Ed Conley last week, the ones wearing the pitchforks."

"I saw it, riding in," the showman admitted.

"Well, maybe you saw something else," Brockley said harshly. "Maybe you saw a way of building up your Double H herd by using a running-iron on the Pitchfork brand, turning it into yours."

"Easy!" the Sheriff said quietly.

"Easy, hell! We were together when we found those twenty head of cattle hidden at the north end of this rustler's spread."

"What's that?" Snake River Jim asked.

"That's it," the Sheriff said. "We took a sashay up toward the badlands and found the missing stock hidden away. Not a very good job of hiding."

"Or of using that running-iron," Brockley cried. "Hell, the blisters were fresh, and the swallow-forking of the ears still raw."

"This is ridiculous," Snake River Jim said, forcing anger into his tone. "Those cattle are mine; I bought them legally from Ed Conley."

The Sheriff nodded. "I'll look at the bill-of-sale."

"Well," Snake River spread his hands—"I haven't got the bill of sale with me. I left it with Pancho, who works for me. But I swear the cattle are mine. And being mine, I naturally had the right to change the Pitchfork into a Double H."

"To hell with this talk, Sheriff!" Brockley cried. "By God, I swore out a warrant. Now use it."

SNAKE RIVER looked from man to man. "Then I am under arrest for rustling, is that right?" he asked.

"Seems as how," the Sheriff agreed quietly. "Let's go."

"I still insist this is a gross mistake," Snake River Jim declared indignantly. "This will blacken my reputation; and I'm warning you, I'll sue for false arrest."

"Sue and be damned!" Clem Brockley shouted. "You and Martin are of the same stripe; I'll see you get prison for this."

SNAKE RIVER stood, staring at the enraged cattleman. His eyes were amused, as he shrugged in apparent dejection.

"I'll saddle up," he said.

Moments later, they rode toward Abilene, silent now, the rising sun painting their backs with warmth. Snake River lit a thin stogie, face calm, utterly relaxed. The Sheriff rode a length behind, his eye enigmatic, frowning now and then as his gaze went from man to man. And as the minutes passed, some of the anger faded from Clem Brockley, a slow smile of attainment coming to his mouth. He nodded to himself now and then, as realization came.

ABILENE was alive when they entered. Men walked the streets, not carousing now, but intent on their tasks. Wagons loaded at the general store; and farther along, swambers swept desultorily at the board walks which lined the main street.

They stopped before the jail, dismounting and loop-knotting reins at the rack. "In here," the Sheriff said, and gestured with a thumb.

SNAKE RIVER led the way, blinking against the dimness of the jail. Facing the room were three cells, two of them empty, Bob Martin sitting disconsolately on the bunk of the third. "Here's your pal, Martin," Clem Brockley said. "He got itchy fingers, too."

"Hello, Bob," Snake River said pleasantly.

"Snake River!" young Martin said. "What they bringing you in for?"

SNAKE RIVER Jim shook his head. "Can't really figure it out," he said thoughtfully. "Seems Clem Brockley's got the idea anybody who owns your—I mean *my*—ranch is a rustler. Anyway, that's the charge he's made."

"He's crazy!"

"We'll see, we'll see," Brockley said.

The Sheriff moved forward. "Center cell, Snake River," he said. "Now be smart and don't cause trouble."

"I won't," Snake River promised.

"I'll get Judge Davis. He'll hold a preliminary hearing here, then set date for trial, if that's all right with you?"

"Fine, fine," Snake River agreed, and winced as the iron gate was swung to, the lock snicking shut with a rasp of iron on iron.

"Talk all you damned well please!" Clem Brockley snapped balefully from the doorway. "I've got a witness to your rustling, and try to talk your way out of those fresh-branded cattle."

"I'll try," Snake River said mildly.

In the next hour he talked to young Martin through the bars, laughter in his voice. And slowly the tension went from the other, humor tilting the corners of his mouth. The Judge and his clerk came in, held a brief session, while Snake River pled not guilty to the charge of rustling. Trial was set for eight days away.

Clem Brockley made no threats then. He smiled, content now, and after the session, he left the jail, heading across the street to the nearest bar. Within an hour the town would know that Snake River Jim was a cow-thief.

The Sheriff stared at the wanted posters on the wall, swinging his gaze around now and then in quiet scrutiny of the imperturbable medicine man.

"Snake River," he said at last, "you're no fool. How you could be caught in a mixup like this, is beyond me. Good Lord, a kid could have figured a better story and done a better job of rustling."

SNAKE RIVER leaned against the bars, smoke rising from his stogie, his left hand preening the glorious sweep of his mustaches. A half-smile twisted his mouth even as he spoke.

"By golly, Sheriff," he said, "if I didn't make a mistake! Me and my memory; I knew it'd get me in a jam some day. I plumb forgot I didn't give Pancho that bill-of-sale for the cattle."

He drew a slip of paper from his vest pocket, extending it through the bars. Frowning, the officer bent forward and took it, holding it into the light from the barred window.

"Seems in order," he said at last.

SNAKE RIVER grinned. "It is," he admitted. "Conley sold me those cattle just yesterday morning. Send a man out to talk with him."

He snapped his fingers.

"And Sheriff," he continued, "I just started thinking. This Brockley is a tough *hombre*; when he wants something, he wants it bad. I'm just wondering what a man like yourself would find, if he'd mosey up toward those cañons at the north of the Rocking M."

"Cattle, maybe," the Sheriff said unemotionally. "Maybe cattle that was supposed to have been rustled."

SNAKE RIVER blew smoke judiciously. "It could be," he admitted, "not that I'm saying you'd find anything. But seeing as how he wants the ranch so much, he might do a bit of skulduggery, wouldn't you say?"

The Sheriff stood. "I wouldn't say," he said slowly; but a slow amusement was growing in his eyes. "If Conley identifies that stock as yours, and if about twenty head should be found in the Rocking M cañons, hidden, so to speak, then Mr. Brockley might be in somewhat of a jam himself."

"Somewhat. False arrest, maybe," Snake River conceded.

The Sheriff shook his head. "I figured something like this," he said, "for I've heard about you. I don't know what you're planning, nor how this will end. But me—well, I've a

hunch I'd hate to be Brockley." He grinned. "Just between you and me," he finished, "as long as it's legal, the sky's the limit."

"Better get to riding, Sheriff," Snake River advised complacently.

He turned and was smiling at young Martin, as the Sheriff left the jail.

"Showdown, Bob," he said. "I think my hole card will do the trick."

CLEM BROCKLEY was pale again, but not from anger this time. Outside, Abilene was throwing off the somberness of the day, lights springing through windows, the first chant of the whisky barkers lifting in the still air.

But inside the jail there was no merriment. Snake River Jim leaned against the open cell door, and the contempt in his face was hard and direct.

"Ruined," he said forcibly, "by God, you've ruined my reputation beyond repair." Casually, he dismissed a few too-true charges which had followed him in the past. "I'm an honest man, planning to retire on my own ranch, and you plaster me with a cattle-rustling charge. Brockley, I'll have your hide for this."

Clem Brockley licked heavy lips, eyes desperately swinging from Snake River to the Sheriff and back again.

"Look," he said placatingly, "I'll make a public apology."

The Sheriff smiled wryly at the poster testifying to the depredations of the Loco Kid, thief, rustler and murderer.

"It won't do," Snake River said scornfully. "You took advantage of the law to jail me on a charge which blackens my name throughout all Texas. By God, sir, I'll sue you for every dime you have; and"—his voice grew coldly hard—"I'll get them."

"Sheriff—" Brockley began.

The Sheriff shook his head. "Don't pull me in on this. You swore out a warrant, and I served it. Those cattle were bought by Snake River, and your missing cattle were still on your range. Me, I think Snake River has got a case, from what I remember of other deals."

"My night-rider saw him." Sweat pooled on Brockley's skin.

"He was probably drunk," Snake River said in dismissal.

The Sheriff rubbed his arm, ruefully fingering the rip in the sleeve and the bruised flesh.

"I'll bill you for this shirt, Snake River," he said. "And maybe I'll beat a little sense into that horse of mine."

Snake River glanced idly at the torn shirt, his thought still intent on Brockley.

"Why should I pay?" he asked.

The Sheriff glanced up. "It was your calf that broke its leg, so that I

had to shoot it," he said. "I started packing it in on my horse, and the damned critter shied at the smell of blood, pitching me like a greenhorn."

"To hell with the shirt!" Brockley said. "Listen, Snake River, I said I was sorry, so why don't we forget the whole thing?"

Snake River shook his head. "Not by a long shot," he said evenly. "I'm suing you for plenty." He considered. "Of course, you could settle out of court."

"How much?" Clem Brockley's face was that of a cornered man.

"Five thousand dollars is a good round sum."

"You're crazy!" And Clem Brockley clenched his fists. "I'll see you in hell first."

"Let's see the Judge, Sheriff," Snake River Jim said. "I'm figuring on Brockley having his day in court."

"A thousand—and it's blackmail," Brockley screamed.

"Five thousand—or I'll add libel to the charge," Snake River said flatly.



"Half," Bob Martin argued. "Half the ranch; you can take it easy."

Clem Brockley sucked at his lower lip, rocking his head in indecision. His eyes appealed to the Sheriff, found no sympathy, then went to Bob Martin in the cell, and finally came to rest on the old showman.

"You win, damn you, you win," he said.

"Good!" Snake River brushed non-existent dirt from his snakeskin vest, its rattles chattering ominously. "But I don't want cash; just bring the note you hold of young Martin's."

"I'll—" Brockley began; then his shoulders slumped and he turned and left the jail.

"That was pretty," the Sheriff said casually. "Blackmail, and you can't be touched."

"Not blackmail," Snake River Jim said judiciously, "just payment for a day in jail." He grinned. "Good day's wages."

"I suppose so," the Sheriff admitted and swung his feet onto the desk. White skin showed through the tear in his sleeve, and he winced a bit, fingering the bruised flesh.

"About this shirt," he said, "or can you figure a way of whickering me out of the cost?"

"Buy it and charge it to—" A thought caught at Snake River, and he bent down, peering at the sleeve.

"How'd that happen?" he asked.

"My horse threw me. He smelled fresh blood and didn't like it."

Snake River was remembering now, a thought coming to life in his mind, growing bright and clear.

"Look," he said, "have you got a spade?"

The Sheriff blinked. "Sure," he said. "Why?"

"Can you dig with that arm?"

"If I had to." The Sheriff frowned, puzzlement in his gaze. "What are you figuring on digging?"

Snake River snapped his fingers. "And have you still got the hides Brockley dug up back of Martin's barn?"

"Sure," the Sheriff said, "they're locked up as evidence. Say, what in the hell—"

"It holds!" Snake River Jim said, and swung to the cell where Bob Martin stood. "You'll be out in a couple of hours, boy," he finished.

"You're crazy," Bob Martin said.

"No," Snake River Jim said, and his laughter drew smiles from the listeners. "Listen! The day you were arrested, I drove to your house across the Rocking M. Maude and Susie almost tore out of the harness spooking at something I couldn't see." He grinned. "I just figured something out. Brockley killed his own cattle, stripped their hides and buried the bodies beneath the sand there. So help me, that's what he did! And I'm thinking that a bit of spade work will bring those bodies up."

The Sheriff whistled softly.
"The railroad cook could have been paid off," he said thoughtfully. "Me, I think I'll have a talk with the man—after we do a bit of digging."

Bob Martin strained at the cell bars. "You mean I'll be out of here tonight?" he asked, dawning hope growing in his eyes.

Snake River Jim glanced through the doorway. "In a couple of hours," he said. "Meanwhile, we'll do a bit of mortgage-burning."

They were laughing, the three of them, when Brockley entered. . . .

It was night again, and Snake River Jim sat motionless on the seat of his caravan wagon, smiling down at the uplifted faces of Alice and Bob Martin.

"You kids be careful," he warned. "I'll be in town about a week, doing my show, and then I'll be moving on. Next time, you'll pull your own irons out of the fire."

"Stay with us, Snake River," Alice said, and tears gleamed in her eyes.

"Half," Bob Martin argued. "Half the ranch; you can take it easy."

Snake River Jim shook his head. "Youth is for youth," he said. "I'm too old to settle down; I've got a fiddlefoot." He winked. "Come in and see the show before I leave."

HE clucked to the horses, and the team leaned into the harness. Bottles clinked musically in the rear, and Pancho swore softly in Spanish.

Snake River leaned out to wave good-by, then sat back on the seat, looking ahead down the long road. He felt good, his conscience clear.

The money-belt sagged heavily at his waist, and he flexed his belly muscles against it intimately.

"Señor Jeem?" Pancho said from his back, and thrust a nightmarish face of ochre and green and crimson stripes into view.

"Yes?" Snake River said absently.

"Mi padre likes you," Pancho said; "he tell me so." He frowned, paint mask wrinkling. "He tell me to be hones' like you."

"That's a compliment."

Pancho shrugged. "You no keel anybody, you no let me gutshoot anybody. I think maybe you too hones'."

Snake River smiled, turning his head, liking the little Mexican.

"Your dad told me to keep you honest," he said, "and I figure on doing it."

"Like you?" Pancho asked gravely.

Snake River nodded, wondering how far along the trail to Mexico Ricardo was with the stolen twenty Rocking M cattle, for which Ricardo had shared coming profits.

"Like me," he admitted; and had there been a quarterdeck beneath his boots, a cutlass at his waist, he might have been at home.

The Essence of Democracy

by

JOHN HERSEY

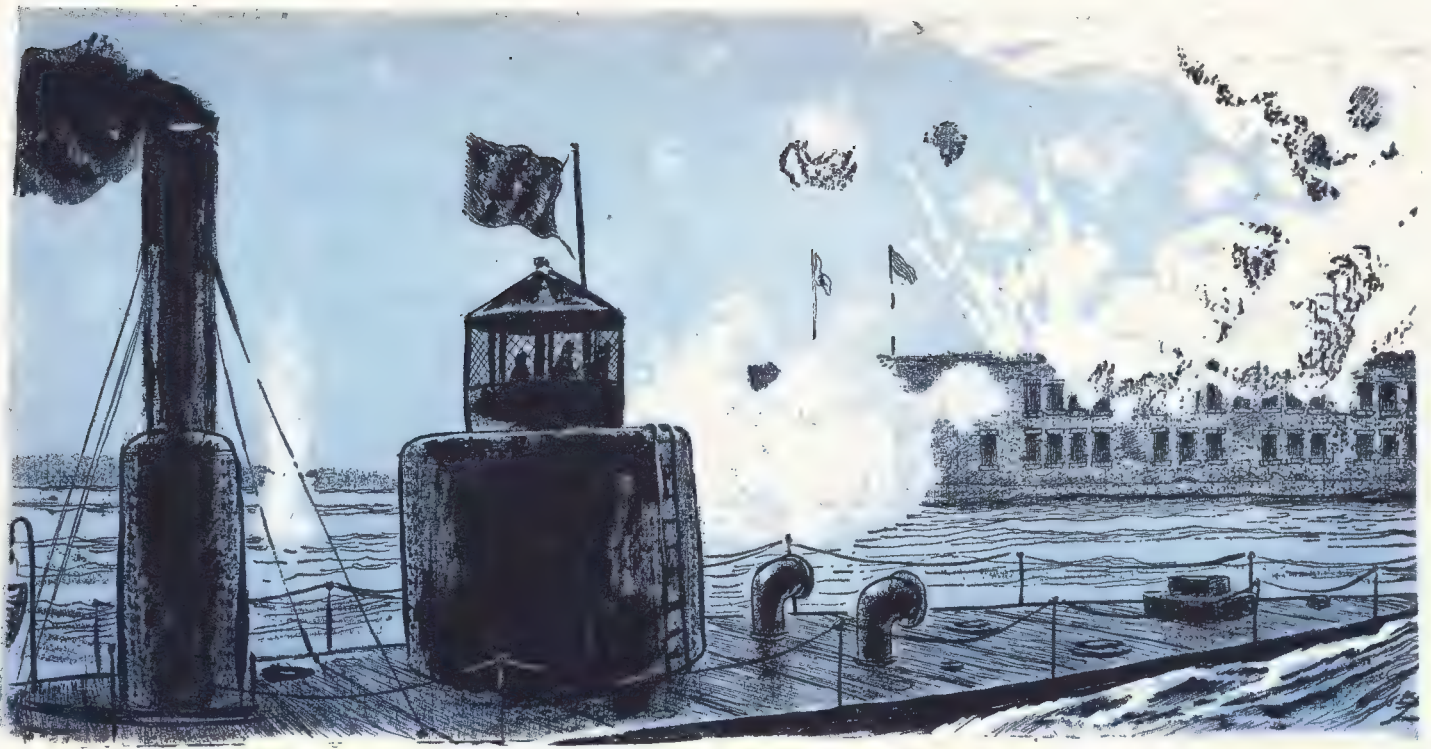
Who wrote "Men on Bataan," "Into the Valley," "A Bell for Adano," and "Hiroshima."

THE big stories are always people. Even in the age when robot planes skim the far side of the skies, and radar bounces off the moon, and the atom is learning how to drive ships, it is people who make the stories. Hiroshima was the story of the most terrible destruction ever conceived by man, and it was the story of the end of a global war; but at the core, Hiroshima was the story of people—of those who lived and those who died; and of us, who have since lived in the shadow of that great mushroom of smoke and dust.

The Community Chest is another story of people. Eighty million of them come within the radius of the Chest Red Feather services. Four of every ten make direct use of a Red Feather health, welfare or recreation service. A large number are contributors; several million are volunteer workers. Their tie with the Community Chest tells a lot about them: about the kind of people they are and the way they do things and what things they consider important.

When Japan held its first Community Chest campaign last winter, it was a failure. The Japanese people, after centuries of autocratic, feudalistic society, were not yet quite ready for an institution to which *everybody gives* and from which *everybody benefits*—for the idea that everybody shares the right to community services and everybody has a share in the responsibility. This idea is the essence of democracy, and it is the story of how people can live together peaceably in our swift-moving age; it's the story behind the Community Chest.





After the *Monitor* had proved her worth against the *Merrimac*, many others were built; in 1863 the North sent an ironclad fleet to attack Fort Sumter; but first, as in other wars before and since, both sides sent greatly daring men to get information behind the enemy lines.

STRATEGIC

EXCEPT for the large mahogany table in its center and the officers in gray uniforms, the great Georgian drawing-room of the Lorraine house was exactly as it had been before the war had begun. Wade Talbot was aware of this immediately upon entering the room with Frank Delamar; the big wing chair by the fireplace, the French sofa beyond it and the familiar portraits, swept him instantly into the tranquil and happy past. The swiftness of the transition surprised him, but he realized at once he should have expected it. Here where he had spent so many evenings with Susanne, her enchantment seemed an almost tangible thing.

With an effort Talbot brought himself back to the present, to the officers of General Beauregard's command grouped about the table where maps and charts were spread, flanked by silver trays of cigars and decanters of pale sherry. Colonel Rhett of the Fort Sumter garrison indicated a chair, and after a brief pause someone asked a question. In his preoccupation with the thought of Susanne, Talbot was only vaguely aware of what was said. He remained silent a moment, gathering his thoughts.

"Gentlemen," he replied, "I am sure you will understand that until

General Beauregard arrives, I feel a certain hesitancy?"

Colonel Rhett nodded; and the man who had asked the question—a captain in the black and red of the Confederate artillery—leaned over the table and poured himself a glass of sherry. Talbot continued:

"I think it's proper for me to say this—as Captain Delamar has told you, I have been with the Federal fleet for the past ten weeks, and there's no doubt that the ironclads now lying outside this harbor are the most powerful naval force ever assembled. The new turret ships of the *Weehawken* class carry fifteen-inch guns and eleven inches of armor. The *New Ironsides*, the flagship, is the most formidable vessel in the Union Navy, perhaps the most formidable in the world. There's no question, either, of the enemy's intention—he will attack. The Federal Government believes it has produced an armored fleet which is practically unsinkable. It expects these ironclads to smash Fort Sumter to rubble and capture Charleston."

Talbot bowed slightly, and immediately his thoughts hurried back to Susanne. It was possible that she was within a few feet of him, perhaps in the next room; the tumultuous excitement of that possibility filled his

mind to the exclusion of all else. Abruptly he realized that an officer seated at his left was speaking—Major Harris of the staff. Talbot listened with an increasing tension of his nerves; his brown hands, slender but strong like his sinewy body, quivered slightly.

"I agree," he said when Harris had finished, "that there are several encouraging factors. Naval assaults upon well-armed land forts have seldom succeeded in the past, and Fort Sumter is well armed. But the attack to be made here involves a new condition. It will be the first real test of the new armored ships against fortifications; and if it succeeds, not only will Charleston be lost, but every Southern port will be in danger. We are confronted with an untried form of warfare—iron ships against a masonry fort; and what I have seen of the Union fleet and the Union seamen convinces me that special measures are necessary. Gentlemen, I've studied those ships until I know every feature of them, and I've known this harbor since boyhood—every foot of it and every current in it. I propose—"

He stopped abruptly. In a moment he continued: "I should prefer, if you gentlemen agree, to wait until General Beauregard—"



SERVICE-1863

by HERBERT
RAVENEL SASS

He was interrupted by the opening of the large door giving upon the hall. A slight, erect, bronzed man, with grizzled mustache and imperial, and wearing a plain but handsome uniform, stood on the threshold. Talbot had a swift impression of a personality consciously dramatic, but vibrant with a quick and bold intelligence. General Beauregard, smiling faintly, moved briskly into the drawing-room.

Talbot rose mechanically with the others, but he was only momentarily aware of General Beauregard. Through the open door he saw, beyond the General, Susanne Lorraine. He stood rigid, almost breathless. Evidently in the absence of her father, Susanne had met the General in the hall and had conducted him to the drawing-room where the staff meeting was to be held.

SHE stood just beyond the threshold, looking curiously into the room, her glance moving about among the handsomely uniformed officers grouped around the table. The light from the great chandelier over the table, streaming through the doorway, illumined the hall also, and Talbot saw her clearly—her face of a high-born French marquise above the perfect shoulders of a Venus of Cyrene.

She was in white evening dress, a blood-red camellia in her ebony hair; and it came over Talbot, with a surge of wonder and of hope, that she was more beautiful than ever; and yet there was a shadow in her eyes. She did not see him; he was nearly hidden from her by Frank Delamar's bulk, and her glance slipped past him. At last the door closed silently, shutting her from view. Like a man emerging from a trance, Talbot realized that Frank was presenting him to General Beauregard.

"General," Delamar said, "this is the gentleman of whom I spoke to you—my friend Lieutenant Wade Talbot, of the Confederate Navy. He was captured by the enemy early in the war and spent a year in a Northern prison. He escaped, made his way to Philadelphia and signed as a seaman on a unit of the Yankee ironclad fleet just before it sailed for Charleston. He managed to swim ashore last night, and one of our patrols picked him up. He has studied the Union ironclads with an expert's eye, and he has a plan of action which he would like to put before you."

Wade Talbot told himself two hours later that the fact of war was no fact but mere macabre illusion. Here in this remembered loveliness

it was impossible to believe that all around him the city was an armed camp awaiting attack, and that only a little while ago, closeted with Beauregard, he had helped to plan wholesale death.

He was in Susanne's garden. That he was there seemed a miracle, yet it had happened naturally enough. The grounds of the Lorraine house on East Battery extended clear through the block to Church Street, where a small postern gate in the high brick wall gave access to the garden from the street. Walking around the block to return to his lodging after outlining his proposal to Beauregard, Talbot had found himself opposite this gate.

The hour was late and no one was visible. A sudden impulse possessed him. Almost before he knew it, he had passed through the gate into the garden.

He had gone at once to the stone bench under the rose-and-jessamine arbor. He had sat there often with Susanne in the past, the past which now was recreated so vividly that it alone was real. The last time had been another April evening two years ago just before the beginning of the war; and then, as now, the air had been heavy with honeysuckle, and a

mockingbird, hidden in tall spikenards behind him, had been singing.

Talbot sat relaxed, his hands clasped loosely above his knees. At the end of the moonlit path leading past the bench he could see the house. Lights glowed in the lower windows, where evidently Beauregard was still busy with his aides, but probably Susanne had retired long ago.

That shadow in her eyes—had he imagined it or was it real? In the brief interval which he had spent with Frank since swimming ashore, there had been little opportunity to speak of personal matters. But Frank would have known how eager he must be to hear about Susanne—and Frank had told him nothing about her, except that she was in Charleston and was well.

Something, Talbot concluded, had happened between Susanne and Frank—something decisive and final. Well, he had expected that. Of the three men who loved her, Frank was, he reflected, probably the best. But somehow Talbot had always known that it wouldn't be Frank; it would be either himself or Berg—Berg Norman of Michigan, tall, yellow-haired, magnificent in his blue naval uniform—a blond blue-eyed viking from the West who had taken Charleston's innermost social citadels by storm when he was stationed here before the war.

Wade Talbot's thoughts lingered upon Berg, his classmate at the Naval Academy and fellow-ensign in the old Navy before he, Talbot, like nearly all his fellow-Southerners, had resigned to enter the little navy of the Confederate States. It was he who in those days before the war had pulled the wires—his father had had influence in high naval circles—which had got Berg transferred to Charleston. Therefore, ironically, it was he who had brought Berg and Susanne together. And now Berg Norman was coming back. He was a lieutenant on the *New Ironsides* outside the bar; and he was coming in if the biggest naval guns in the world could get him in. If Susanne was in love with Berg, it was easy to understand why her eyes were troubled.

WADE TALBOT'S muscles suddenly grew tense. At the rear of the house a door had opened. Susanne was coming down the steps from the rear portico into the garden. Looking down the wide moonlit path, he could see her almost as plainly as though it were noon.

He sat rigid. She was coming along the path directly toward him. The bench, roofed over by the arbor and walled in on three sides by young spikenards, was in deep shadow. If he sat there quietly, she would pass without seeing him. Should he let her pass? Or had he the courage to

face his fate—to learn now, finally and irrevocably, the answer to the only question that mattered?

Panic swept him. No, he couldn't face the issue now. The crisis had burst upon him too abruptly; he must have time to steel himself against disaster. Susanne, moving unhurriedly along the moonlit path, was less than a dozen yards away. Suddenly Wade Talbot was completely calm. Yes, this was it—the moment of decision. This was the moment of which he had dreamed a thousand times during his two years of absence. His shoulders straightened. He stirred on the bench—then instantly he froze into immobility again.

A man had emerged from the shrubbery twenty feet behind Susanne. He was striding after her along the path; a tall wide-shouldered man, bare-headed, in a grease-stained blue shirt and butternut trousers. Talbot's muscles tautened: Some drunken mechanic or longshoreman from the docks who had found his way into the garden! And apparently the man meant mischief. Talbot half rose, then, suddenly limp, sank back upon the bench.

Berg Norman! It couldn't be, but it was! Berg Norman, who belonged on the *New Ironsides* out there beyond the bar. He must have slipped in—the thought came like a flash—in a smallboat through the back creek behind Cummings Point; on one of their fishing cruises Talbot had himself shown Berg that tortuous channel. Berg in Charleston in disguise! Here in Susanne's garden!

It seemed to Talbot that time stopped. He couldn't think of anything except the look on Berg's face. Berg was half running, half walking along the path behind Susanne. In the soft soil his feet made no sound that Talbot could hear, but Susanne must have heard him, for suddenly she turned. He was almost upon her, and without a word, he took her in his arms, crushing her to him, pressing his lips to hers.

Wade Talbot, on the bench in the black shadow of the rose arbor, shivered. His limbs were trembling; but he himself, his real being, was completely calm; it was as though all feeling had died in him. Berg was still holding her close; his lips were still upon hers. At last she tore herself free.

She swayed as though about to fall, and Norman's hand shot out to catch her, but she drew back quickly.

"No—no," she said breathlessly. "You must go. I—I'll give you two minutes, five minutes."

Berg Norman was breathing fast also, but he was smiling.

"Five minutes," he asked, "and then?"

"Then I'll call them," she panted. "The house is full of officers, soldiers. One scream—"

Breath failed her, but in a moment she continued more steadily, though her voice was shaken with tears:

"Heaven knows how you got here, but you thought that, because you are you, you could come to me now and that I—I would keep silent, help you to escape with what you've learned by your spying. You thought you could make me a traitor! Berg, how could you do this thing?"

"Su," Norman denied quickly, "I didn't think that. I came ashore to learn certain things about Beauregard's guns, and I haven't learned them, because his secrets are guarded well. I slipped in here through the back gate to walk for a minute where we used to walk; and if you hadn't come as if by a miracle, you'd never have known. When you came, I couldn't help what I did. Fate brought you to me, and I believe in Fate. When it brought you out here to me tonight, surely, that meant something; surely it meant you and I—"

SUDDENLY from beyond the garden wall came the tramp of marching men. Swinging the corner from the dirt side-street, a brigade of infantry had come noisily upon the cobbled paving. Over the wall the tips of bayonets glittered in the moonlight; a Confederate battle-flag went by.

He couldn't go now, Talbot realized. He had been about to leave the bench, steal away through the shrubbery behind it, and climb the wall. But troops were passing along the street behind him also; the garden had become an island in the midst of an army. If he were seen climbing the wall, it might bring men into the garden, and Berg would be taken.

He sat motionless, staring at the two in the path in front of him. Susanne's hands were clenched at her sides. Berg Norman, apparently heedless of all else, was gazing intently at her face, as though afraid that at any moment it might vanish. For an interminable time the shimmering bayonet points went by above the wall; then at last they were gone, and the rhythmic beat of the marching feet diminished and died in the distance.

Berg's eyes were bright.

"Su," he said, "you didn't—"

She broke in upon him desperately:

"Berg, you must go. I don't know how you got here, but you must go the same way you came. The wharves are guarded, and patrol boats are watching the harbor. You don't know, you don't realize—if you're caught in disguise in our lines—Berg, why did you come? There's hardly a chance—"

"There hasn't been an hour of these two years," he said slowly, "when



Consciously dramatic but vibrant with intelligence, General Beauregard moved briskly into the room.

*Illustrated by
John McDermott*



A man had emerged from the shrubbery behind Susanne. Talbot half rose, then suddenly limp, sank back upon the bench. Berg Norman! It couldn't be—but it was!

I haven't loved you. I've dreamed of those days here before the war began, and sometimes I've wondered whether they were only a dream. Frank Delamar and Wade Talbot and I. The Three Inseparables, as all Charleston called us. And all three of us in love with you, Susanne. You were the center of our universe—we revolved around you like stars around the sun. You didn't drive us apart and make us hate one another; instead, you held us together. I don't know how you did that, Su—it doesn't happen often—but somehow you did."

She was silent, her shoulders heaving. His eyes never left her face.

"Su," he said quietly, "Frank's the best of us, but somehow I always knew it wouldn't be Frank. I knew it would be either Wade or myself."

Impulsively he held out his arms to her.

"Won't you," he asked, "tell me tonight—before I go?"

Wade Talbot, invisible in the shadow of the rose arbor, knew that

this was the decisive moment of the universe. Berg Norman was moving toward her, his arms outstretched. She did not draw back. Norman took her into his arms again, and her arms encircled his shoulders.

After a long time she drew away, still keeping her hands on his shoulders, looking up at him, her lips trembling. Berg Norman stood motionless, gazing down into her eyes. Then he took her hands in his, held them a moment at his lips and, releasing them, moved quickly past her. Ten paces away, the path curved sharply to the right toward the gate in the garden wall. At the curve of the path he turned and waved his hand. Then he was gone.

FROM the deep pit amid the low sand hillocks of Cummings Point where he waited alone, Wade Talbot could see the whole of the preparing battle: Cummings Point at the south, and Sullivan's Island at the north, formed the gateway of the harbor.

Through this wide portal the Union fleet had to pass before coming to grips with Fort Sumter rising sheer from the water well within the entrance of the bay.

For two days after arrival, the fleet had occupied itself with sounding the channel. Now, in the afternoon of the third day, the ironclads were moving in. They were passing Cummings Point in long procession, four turret ships in the van, then the huge bulk of the *New Ironsides*, followed by three more monitors, with the double-turreted *Keokuk* bringing up the rear. Westward beyond Fort Sumter the roofs and spires of Charleston rose apparently from the blue waters of the inner harbor; he could see the tall steeples of St. Michael's and St. Philip's and the high façades of the great houses along the sea wall promenade, their roofs and pillared piazzas thronged now with anxious thousands.

Undoubtedly Susanne was there. The third-story piazza of the Lorraine

mansion on East Battery overlooked the whole harbor; Susanne and her parents would view the panorama of the battle from that vantage point. It was strange, he reflected, that this tremendous moment should find them all together again: Susanne in Charleston; Frank Delamar, on Beauregard's staff, in Charleston also; Berg Norman on the *New Ironsides* coming in; himself, Wade Talbot, here at Cummings Point at the harbor mouth.

Berg, he knew, hadn't been captured; the whole city would have rung with it if that had happened; he must have managed somehow to get back to the fleet. Talbot's eyes caught a movement of men on the seaward parapet of Fort Sumter. Above them the battle flag of the Confederacy climbed its tall staff; he heard wild cheering, then a burst of exultant music—the garrison band playing "Dixie."

The boom of a cannon put an end to the music. The opening gun! A shore battery on Sullivan's Island across the bay had fired at long range at the *Weekawken*, the leading ship.

TALBOT'S gaze returned quickly to Fort Sumter. It was coming now—the real beginning. Suddenly the fort was enveloped in smoke, a white billowing cloud flecked with red jets of flame. The shattering roar of the first great salvo of the battle smashed into Talbot's consciousness like an ax smashing into his brain.

He braced himself against the reiterated shocks of the enormous thunder-crashes battering at his ears. He was still conscious of Susanne watching yonder across the harbor, but more and more intensely his thoughts were focusing upon the part he might have opportunity to play. The pit in which he stood was uncovered except at one end, where it was roofed with boards and tarpaulin. In this covered part was the cot on which he had slept these past two nights. In the middle of the pit on a movable table was an electric battery and from this battery an insulated cable extended across the beach and entered the water. At the side of the battery was a flat projection resembling a telegraph key.

Would his chance come, he wondered—the chance to press that key? The thunder of the cannon was almost incessant. Over the fort and the whole lower bay hung a vast white battle-cloud, brightened to silver by the declining sun. At intervals the light breeze lifted it, and he could see then that the water around the ironclads was churned by a rain of projectiles. The turret ships, moving to and fro in long ellipses, were firing steadily. The *Keokuk* and *Nahant* in particular were gallantly engaging Sumter. The *New Ironsides*, he saw, was firing at much longer range than

the turret ships, and Talbot judged from her movements that she was partly unmanageable.

He had expected this, for he had foreseen that it would be difficult to maneuver the great flagship between the arms of the bay. It was for the turret ships that his trap was set. He knew that when the tide reached its full force, a strong cross-current would flow southward toward Cummings Point. He had known that current since boyhood; and knowing the turret ships intimately, especially their sluggish steering at slow speeds, he had told Beauregard that the battle would shift under the influence of the cross-current toward Cummings Point, where he now was.

Everything hinged upon the correctness of that assumption; the whole success of his plan depended upon it. He realized, with a tightening of his lips, that the moment for which he waited must be near. A puff of breeze lifted the smoke-cloud obscuring the harbor. The *New Ironsides*, he saw, had gathered way again and was moving forward to support the turret ships.

He watched her intently. She had come closer in than he had thought possible and was nearer to Cummings Point than any of her consorts. If she held her course many minutes longer, she would meet the cross-current sweeping toward the Point.

Presently he saw that she was in the tide-rip. She began to make leeway rapidly, while at the same time her headway slackened. With a swift catch of his breath, Wade Talbot realized that she was drifting almost broadside-on straight toward a small white object on the water like the sail of a boy's toy boat.

He stared wide-eyed at the huge black ironclad looming nearer and nearer, smoke pouring in a dense cloud from her squat funnel. His hand moved closer to the key on the electric battery beside him. Under the white marker on the water was the thing to which the electric cable led—an eighteen-foot water-tight boiler charged with three thousand pounds of powder, enough to blast any ship out of existence.

He had persuaded Beauregard to put it there. He had hoped for several of these improvised mines, believing that they might make the difference between defeat and victory, but there had been time to place only one. He had used his intimate knowledge of the harbor currents to select the location of this one, and he knew now with an almost sickening certainty that his calculations had been exactly accurate. The *New Ironsides* was within a ship's length of the white marker, moving straight toward it. The mightiest vessel of the attacking fleet, perhaps the mightiest warship in

the world, was at his mercy. He had only to press the key on the electric battery at his side—

His hand, poised above the key of the battery, trembled. His plan had succeeded; it had succeeded in a way he had never dreamed of. Not a turret ship, as he had expected, but the *New Ironsides* herself. The *New Ironsides*, with Berg Norman on board of her, with Susanne waiting and watching yonder in Charleston—Susanne, whose life and happiness were bound to Berg. In a momentary lull of the cannon he heard a slight sound behind him, but he did not turn. The *New Ironsides* reached the marker. His hand was on the battery key.

It seemed to him that he saw Susanne across the intervening miles of water; she was looking straight at him; there was entreaty in her eyes. Suddenly blackness engulfed him. . . .

Wade woke to a confused and deepening despair. With a vague surprise he realized that now it was night, and that the noise of the guns had ceased. Little by little memory came back to him: the *New Ironsides* directly over the mine, his hand on the battery key . . . Susanne's eyes pleading for Berg's life . . . a sudden enveloping darkness. That much he remembered—then nothing. He had failed; why he had failed his numbed mind couldn't now decide. Was it for Susanne? Had he sacrificed his country for her? Lying on the sand at the bottom of the pit, he was staring up at the stars when, faintly at first and then unmistakably, he heard someone call his name. He got slowly to his feet and, strangely weak, his head throbbing, stood leaning against the side of the pit.

A LANTERN was coming from the direction of the beach. Beauregard's men, he said to himself. He wondered dully how he could explain his failure, whether it would mean a court-martial. Soon the approaching forms took shape in the moonlight. When they were very near, he saw with surprise that they were Frank Delamar, a tall bearded private with a musket under his arm, and Susanne.

Delamar, with the lantern, jumped down into the pit. Susanne and the soldier followed. Susanne, wrapped in a dark cloak, was very pale. Wade Talbot leaned against the side of the pit, staring at her, saying nothing. Delamar spoke first.

"Wade," he asked breathlessly, "what went wrong? We could see that the *Ironsides* was over the mine. Why didn't you blow her up, man? What happened to you?"

"I can't tell you, Frank," Talbot said slowly. "It doesn't matter what happened. I failed—that's all."

Delamar's face was haggard. "What do you mean, Wade?" he asked



Delamar spoke first. "Wade," he asked breathlessly, "what went wrong?"

hoarsely. "There must be some reason. You couldn't have—"

There was a movement in the blackness at the covered end of the pit, and a man stepped out of the darkness there.

"Berg!" Delamar exclaimed. "Berg Norman! What the devil—"

Wade Talbot stared in amazement. Norman, still clad in the stained shirt and butternut trousers that he had worn in Susanne's garden, was haggard too, his face rough with young beard. He smiled at Talbot and Delamar, but he seemed to see only Susanne.

"Frank," he said, "here's what happened: I'd been in Charleston, and I was trying to get back to the fleet. I got this far, but one of your patrols nearly caught me, and I had to abandon my boat. I was hiding in the myrtles yonder when the fleet came in this afternoon. I saw this pit, and the cable leading from it, and the white marker on the water, and naturally I knew there was a mine under the marker, and that the man in the pit would explode the mine if a ship passed over it. So when I saw the *New Ironsides* drifting straight toward the marker, I crept up behind the pit, and at the last minute jumped into it and hit the man in the head with a chunk of driftwood I'd picked up."

He turned to Talbot. "It wasn't your fault, Wade, that the *New Ironsides* escaped. I knocked you out."

Nobody spoke. Talbot's mind was struggling with the thing he had just learned. A question framed itself—would he have pressed that battery key? Would he have destroyed Susanne's happiness for his country? With an immense relief he realized that now he didn't have to answer that question even to himself. He understood now why his head ached, and he remembered too the sound he had heard behind him in the pit just before the blackness came. Frank Delamar, swearing under his breath, put the lantern down on the sand. His face was bewildered; he ran his hand through his thick hair.

"Berg," he said, "I don't understand this yet. You knocked Wade out, and then—"

He stopped suddenly as though he had just remembered something. He drew his pistol.

"I hate this, old fellow," he said to Norman, "but of course you're my prisoner; please remember that. Now go ahead and tell us. After you'd knocked Wade out—"

"Well, then," Norman said, "I discovered it was Wade; his back had been turned to me when I hit him. There was no cut on his head—his

hat prevented that—but I had hit him hard, and he was unconscious. I was afraid his skull was fractured. I bathed his head with water from his canteen, and watched him and watched the battle. You've taught us something today, Frank. Of course we'll be back, but you've taught us that even ironclad ships can't slug it out with strong land forts. You've taught us that our new ironclads aren't invincible after all. When the fleet withdrew, two of them passed so close that I could see the holes and dents in their armor—"

"Why didn't you swim out to them?" Delamar asked.

Norman hesitated, and Delamar said: "I'll answer that for you. You stayed with Wade because you believed he would die if you left him." He broke off and stood frowning. "You're a Union officer in disguise in the Confederate lines," he went on, "and you knew damned well that if you were captured, you'd be shot or hanged. But you stayed with Wade when you might have swum off to those ships. And now here you are on my hands, and I'm an officer of the Confederate Army—"

He turned suddenly to the bearded soldier leaning on his musket.

"Jim Barnes," he said, "you're deaf and dumb and blind. You can't

see anything, and you can't remember anything. You wouldn't be fool enough to remember that you and I took this Yankee prisoner to our boat to bring him back to the city, and that all of a sudden he took the boat from us and rowed off to the Yankee fleet in it. Because if you should happen to remember that, you'd be hanged for it."

The soldier grinned. "Why, sure, Cap'n Frank," he replied. "I kin easy disremember a triflin' thing like that."

Delamar returned his pistol to its holster and picked up the lantern. "Come along, Berg," he said briskly. He climbed out of the pit, and Barnes followed him. Wade Talbot saw that Berg was standing in front of Susanne, that he had taken her hands in his. He saw Berg lifting her hands to his lips. He turned away. He mustn't see her in Berg's arms again.

Presently he heard Berg Norman climbing out of the pit. He felt a hand on his arm. Susanne was beside him. He didn't look at her.

"Susanne," he said, "I think I ought to tell you. I was there that night in your garden when Berg came. I was in the shadow on the stone bench under the arbor. I saw and heard it all. I wish you every happiness."

She took his face in her hands and drew it down to hers and kissed him. "Take me in your arms, Wade," she whispered. He stood staring and she said again quietly, "Take me in your arms." Dazed and bewildered, he obeyed.

"I tried not to let him know that night in the garden," Susanne said. "I thought it would be his last night; it didn't seem possible he could escape. So I tried not to tell him the truth. And then at the last I had to tell him, after all. While he was holding me in his arms, I told him you were the man I loved. And today he stayed with you at risk of his life and took care of you for me—"

OVER the rim of the pit they could see the glimmer of Frank Delamar's lantern at the water's edge. Presently they heard, keen and clear in the stillness, the creaking of oarlocks.

Susanne freed herself from Talbot's clasp. She climbed to the rim of the pit and stood looking out into the night. Minute after minute, while the returning lantern drew nearer, she stood there gazing in the direction whence the sound of the oarlocks came. Presently the sound died away, then came again, very faintly, and suddenly Susanne leaned forward toward it and held out her arms. Again the sound died. She waited, listening. It was not heard again. She turned, jumped down into the pit and came, quietly and naturally and without a word, back into Talbot's arms.

Songs That Have Made History

IV—LAY OF THE KING AND HIS MINSTREL

BEFORE the walls of Acre, Duke Leopold of Austria ground his teeth and glared in implacable hatred at Richard the Lion-Hearted. The Duke's disobedience of orders just had cost the lives of good knights and men-at-arms, and now he paid the penalty, as at the furious Richard's command the Austrian banner was trampled in the dust. All the army of the Crusaders—even the Saracens watching from the besieged city—were aware that Leopold, given the opportunity, would take vengeance for his disgrace. And everyone also knew that only the unlikely chance would enable the Austrian nobleman to lay hands on the redoubtable King of England.

Yet fate strangely did deliver Richard into his enemy's grasp.

Though Acre fell, difficulties and dissensions blocked further victories. The Third Crusade ended when Richard made a truce with his gallant adversary Saladin, and sailed for England. A storm wrecked his ship on the Austrian coast, and he continued his homeward journey overland. Knowing he was in dangerous territory, he disguised himself. But Cœur de Lion was ever careless and disdainful of peril. He was recognized, captured, and imprisoned in one of Leopold's castles.

Scarcely less elated than Duke Leopold was his overlord, Emperor Henry VI of Germany, along with Philip of France, who shared their fear and envy of Richard. Most overjoyed of all was Richard's mean-spirited brother John; here was the moment he craved to seize the English crown. The Lion-Hearted's jailer was offered huge sums by these rival monarchs to keep him shut up for life, or hand him over to be put to death. For more than a year Richard's loyal subjects had no other tidings of him than rumor. To conceal his whereabouts, he was shifted from castle to castle.

FOR a vigorous and restless spirit, the King bore his captivity well. He made friends with a picked guard of husky soldiers who surrounded him, swords at sides. By day he competed with them in feats of strength, and at night drank them under the table; but locked doors and gates barred his escape. In quieter moments Richard turned to a favorite pastime: composing songs of love to ladies fair, lays

which rivaled those of the troubadours of Provence.

It was another such song that would win him freedom.

Through Austria roamed the King's devoted minstrel, Blondel de Nesle, searching for his master. When he came to a castle, he would inquire whether there were any but ordinary prisoners confined there. Always the answer was no, until he reached one formidable fortress where, he learned, someone of importance was closely held; but Blondel neither could determine the captive's identity nor gain entrance.

THE minstrel took his stand under an iron-grilled window in a tower. Strumming his lute, he sang—a *chanson* in the French tongue, a song he and Richard once had devised together. His voice soared upward.

*"Your beauty, lady fair,
None view without delight,
But still so cold an air
No person can excite;
Yet this I, patient, see
While all are shunned like me."*

From the window rang out strong, familiar, beloved tones—Richard's, replying with the second stanza:

*"No nymph my heart can wound,
If favor she divide,
And smiles on all around,
Unwilling to decide;
I'd rather hatred bear
Than love with others share."*

Blondel needed no surer token. He had found his liege lord. Home he hastened with his news, and England in record time raised Richard's ransom of 150,000 marks. Back in his realm in the year 1194, the King forgave the crawling John he still cherished in spite of all, and quickly suppressed the barons in revolt. One of them he toppled from his battlements with a neat crossbow shot. At the very word of Richard's return, the leader of the rebels died of fright.

The story of the song that saved a King and changed the course of history has been several times dramatized. One version, staged in London's Drury Lane Theatre in 1786, was by "Gentleman Johnny" Burgoyne—so far as Americans were concerned, who had met him at Saratoga ten years earlier, a better dramatist than he was a general.

—by Fairfax Downey

Johnny Fourteen

WHEN I was a boy in New Mexico the old man we called Papa Chico used to bring our mail out to us. Sometimes he would carry visitors out from town in his Ford. That was the way my Uncle Simeon usually arrived. My grandfather said he'd be damned if he'd ever hitch up and drive to town for Simeon. My grandfather didn't care for Simeon, but my grandmother would always go to the sugar bowl, secretly of course, when he came, and get a little roll of bills for him.

Everyone else liked Simeon. Papa Chico thought very well of him. Papa Chico liked to tell stories, but even better he liked to listen to stories, and my grandfather would grudgingly admit that Simeon was an entertaining liar. My grandfather said Papa Chico admired Simeon because Simeon could outlie him.

I admired Simeon because of his expensive cowboy boots. They were black with white inlay, and must have cost a hundred dollars. I had had my own boots picked out in the catalogue for several years by then, but my grandfather said he wasn't laying out any money on fancy foofaraw I'd outgrow in six months, and I didn't have any way of earning money for myself. In the meantime I wore clodhoppers.

Sometimes Simeon worked here or there, but it was hard for him to find a job very long. My grandmother said it was because he was too restless and carefree, but my grandfather said it was because he was too lazy. Simeon was never worried about being out of a job. He always had some idea for the future that was going to make him rich; but as my grandfather observed, it never entailed hard work.

The day Simeon turned up with a wife, Papa Chico was so delighted he drove by his house and got a jug of wine, and they drank from it in celebration on their way out to our place. Then Papa Chico's eyes crossed, and he was unable to drive back to town, so he stayed for supper. When Papa Chico got cross-eyed drunk, he sang songs and told stories to himself, and he was happy in any circumstances; but his gayety was a trifle lonesome that night. My grandmother cried, and my grandfather stomped around in a hot-eyed rage.

Simeon's new wife was named Mary Ann. She had a shy smile and a way of looking at Simeon as if he was the

beginning and the end of the whole world. When she looked at Simeon that way, my grandfather snorted and left the room.

"How's he going to keep a wife?" my grandfather asked my grandmother out in the kitchen, but in a trumpet voice that could have been heard beyond the figure-eight corral. "What are they going to live on? His hot air?"

"Don't carry on so," my grandmother said. "They can hear you."

Then she added that she thought Mary Ann seemed very nice.

"I didn't say she didn't," my grandfather said. "I like her too. But what's going to become of her? How am I going to turn her out?"

"They didn't come to stay," my grandmother said. "They're leaving in the morning."

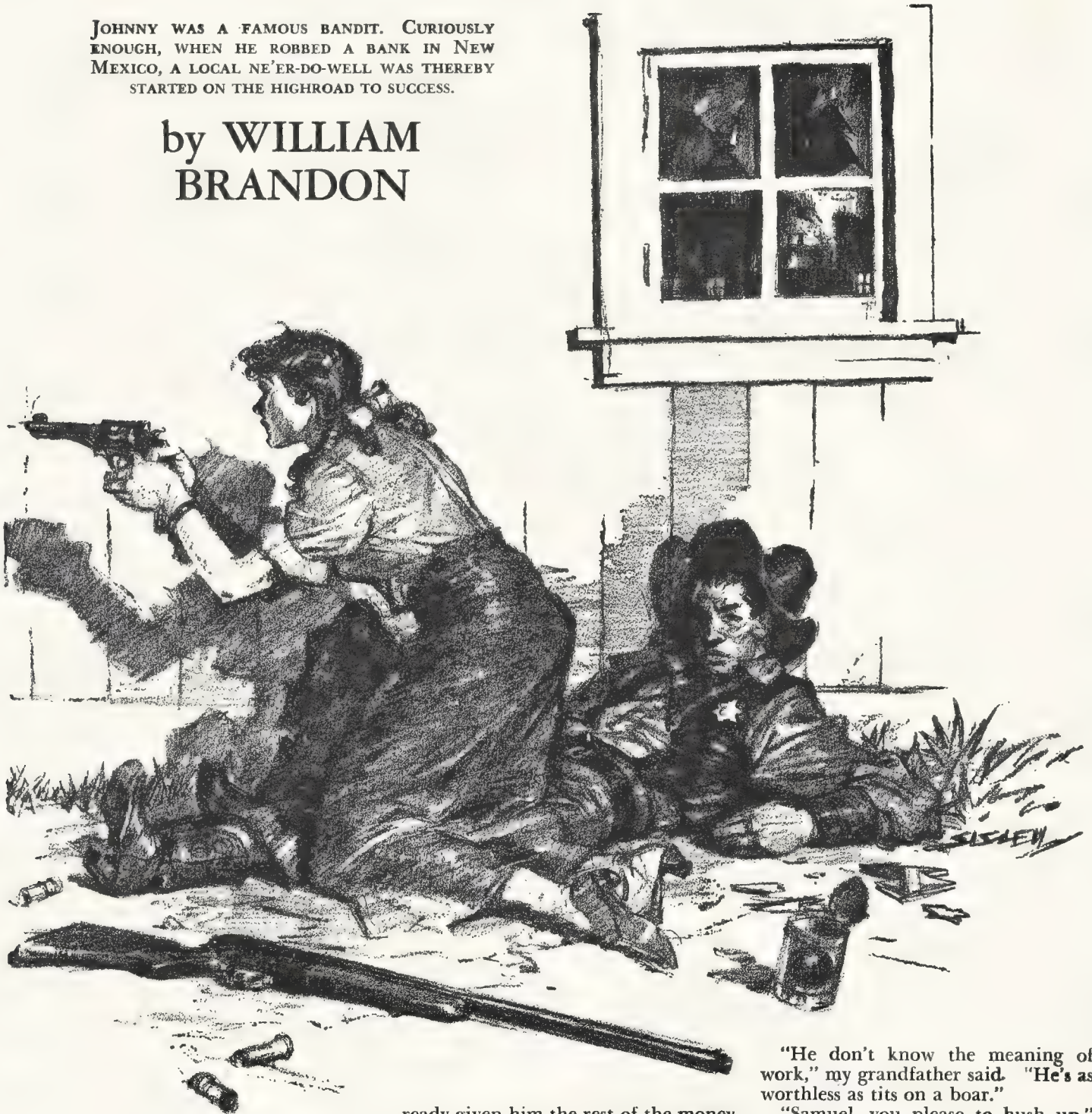
"You're damned right they didn't come here to stay," my grandfather shouted. "We're having a hard enough



and the Politician

JOHNNY WAS A FAMOUS BANDIT. CURIOUSLY ENOUGH, WHEN HE ROBBED A BANK IN NEW MEXICO, A LOCAL NE'ER-DO-WELL WAS THEREBY STARTED ON THE HIGHROAD TO SUCCESS.

by WILLIAM
BRANDON



time keeping our heads above water the way it is. But how am I going to turn her out?"

"I said you won't have to. I told you they're leaving in the morning."

"Leaving where to?" my grandfather asked furiously. "Going out to graze on panic grass? I suppose you've al-

ready given him the rest of the money in the bowl?"

"No," my grandmother said tartly, "I have not. He hasn't asked me for any money."

"He will." My grandfather stomped back and forth. He said: "Him with a wife!"

"Do hush!" my grandmother said. "He's got her now. Now he'll have to work, that's all."

"He don't know the meaning of work," my grandfather said. "He's as worthless as tits on a boar."

"Samuel, you please to hush up," my grandmother said in a certain way.

My grandfather went out and slammed the door.

Papa Chico's eyes were uncrossed the next morning, and he left for town at sunup, without waiting to talk to anyone. Simeon and Mary Ann stayed with us all winter.

Simeon did a little work, fixing this or that when my grandmother asked

him to; but my grandfather wouldn't speak to him, and he made old Long John Bond, who worked for us, keep shy of him too, so Simeon spent most of his time just fooling around.

Papa Chico would stop by every couple of days to sit and listen to Simeon talk. Simeon was cheerful enough all winter. He was always cheerful. He'd go out riding with Mary Ann whenever there was a chance, and he'd swing her around and dance with her in the parlor in the evenings. He was as attentive to her as if he was still courting her, my grandmother said. My grandfather and my grandmother both grew very fond of Mary Ann. My grandfather kept saying it would be a bargain if he could swap off Simeon and keep Mary Ann.

One day in the spring Simeon went to town with Papa Chico, and got in a poker game and won some money. The next week he and Mary Ann moved to Alamitos.

Alamitos was a new town, sprung full-grown from the opening of copper and silver deposits on the south slopes of the Truchas. Large-scale construction work went on under the direction of a major mining company, that would throw its shafts and drifts through the best of the ore bodies, leaving the scraps for the many smaller projects that were under way. This high-rolling development was to die a dry death within a year or two from disappointing ore; but in its beginning Alamitos was as lusty as a kicking calf.

All kinds of people went scrambling into Alamitos to make their fortunes,

ordinary business men and blue-sky promoters, disillusioned homesteaders and dry farmers, carpenters and prospectors and barbers. The town captured the hopes of bankrupt cattlemen and grocers and politicians, bootleggers and monte dealers and shepherders and shoe clerks, and all the bums west of Amarillo, because Alamitos was something new, and something new was opportunity.

AFTER a month or two Papa Chico told us that Simeon had become an important man in Alamitos. Papa Chico himself was going to move his family from Santa Ana to Alamitos and accept a fine position Simeon had offered him. My grandfather told him he was crazy, but Papa Chico went anyway. Finally, my grandmother took me over to visit Simeon and Mary Ann for the Fourth of July. My grandfather wouldn't go, but my grandmother was very proud of the reports she had been hearing of Simeon's success in Alamitos, and she wanted to see for herself how well he was doing.

Simeon and Mary Ann were living in a new unpainted house, made of green lumber and roofed with galvanized iron. They didn't have much furniture, but they had shipped in a tall shiny piano. Mary Ann could play it. It gave an air of real luxury to their home.

Simeon had been made the town marshal. He had a knack for being friendly with everyone, and getting along with people whether they cot-

toned to him or not. He didn't mind a fight now and then, but he never held a grudge. He was young and strong. He was just the kind of man the Company wanted for peace officer in their new town. There was a lot of confusion and a lot of disagreements, and the principal part of Simeon's job was to keep things straight as people moved in, and keep any serious trouble from starting. The Company furnished their own watchmen to guard their equipment lying around loose, and the town's new merchants slept in their stores, but they all chipped in to pay Simeon's wages.

The bootleggers and the dealers of the two or three card games that had been set up automatically cut Simeon in on their profits. Simeon was making so much money that he had hired Papa Chico out of his own pocket and made him a deputy, to patrol the streets and the construction areas, the only part of Simeon's job that approached physical labor. There was no doubt about it, Simeon had skyrocketed to success. He wore a gunbelt and stopped to shake hands with everyone in Alamitos. He was going to have an office on the main street, he said, before the summer was over. Mary Ann wore silk stockings, and she had had her hair marcelled in Albuquerque.

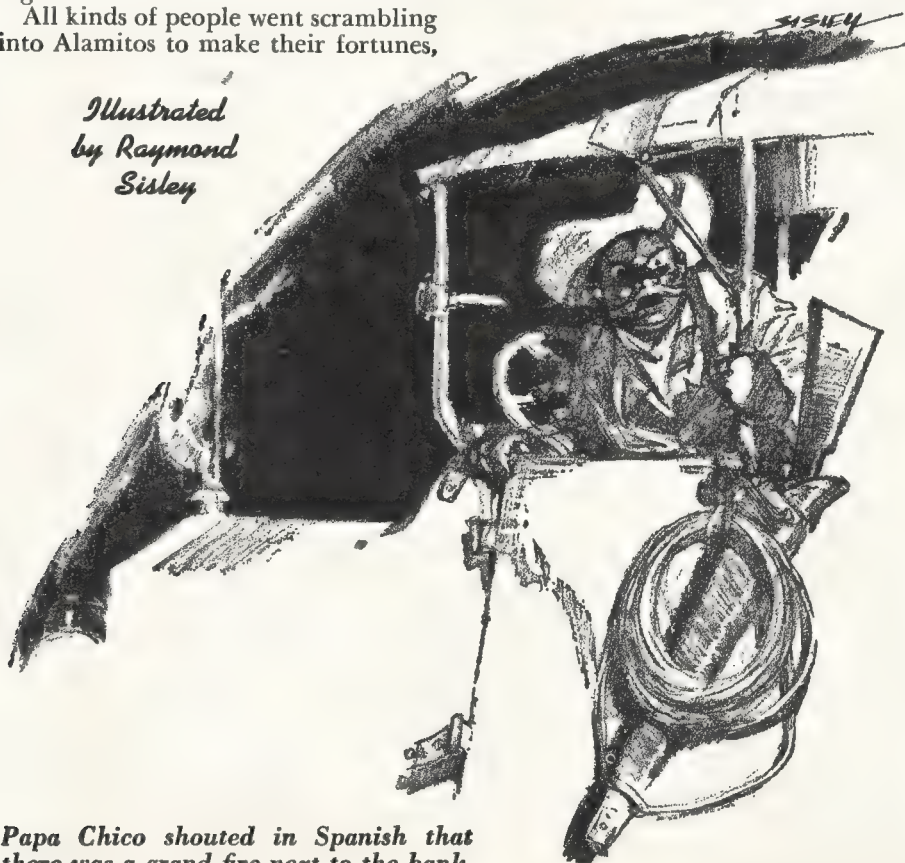
My grandmother was thunderstruck by the new piano, but she was even more impressed when Simeon said he was ordering an automobile. Not everyone had cars in those days. My grandfather was opposed to them on principle, so naturally my grandmother was feverish to own one. She said she had never thought she'd live to see the day when Simeon would be so well off as to buy an automobile. Simeon grinned in a deprecating way, but he was very much pleased.

I HAD never lived in any town before, and Alamitos was an exciting place to me. After a good deal of persuasion my grandmother let me stay with Simeon and Mary Ann for a while after she went home. That's how I came to be on hand when the outlaw Johnny Fourteen raided the bank, and Simeon lost his job.

An Albuquerque bank had set up a branch in Alamitos, in a one-story frame building set at the dusty intersection of two brand-new dusty streets. It was flanked by an adobe structure, raw and unplastered, that was a grocery store in front and a blind tiger in back. Local payrolls, distributed on the tenth and twenty-fifth of each month, were customarily held overnight in the bank under special guard. Johnny Fourteen appeared on the night of the twenty-fourth of July.

At about eleven o'clock that night Papa Chico came honking up to Simeon's house in his Ford, yelling

*Illustrated
by Raymond
Sisley*



Papa Chico shouted in Spanish that there was a grand fire next to the bank.

"Do they have to leave this morning?" my grandfather shouted. "What's the all-fired rush?"



that there was a fire in town. We were all still up, because Simeon and Mary Ann had been having a fight. It was their first fight, and it would have been their last if Johnny Fourteen hadn't come along and changed things. It was a first-class fight. It had started out in back, over a half-wild horse Simeon had brought home. Mary Ann had taken the twitch off the horse and hit Simeon with it, and raised a knot on his head. Then she had packed all her clothes to go away and leave him. When Simeon would go to the bedroom door to argue with her, she would only say, "No," in a cool way, and he would put his hands to his head and sit down for a while, until he would think of something else to shout through the door at her.

He was glad to see Papa Chico, as reinforcement of a sort; but he was afraid to leave with Papa Chico to go

look at the fire because it would give Mary Ann a chance to run away.

Papa Chico sat outside in his car and honked and yelled, and then he ran into the house and shouted in Spanish that there was a very grand fire, and it was next door to the bank.

I could see the glow in the sky through the window. But Simeon was not interested.

He said to Papa Chico: "Mary Ann is going away."

Papa Chico was horrified. This news immediately took precedence over a fire with him too.

He said: "Can this be true?"

"She's flat down through with me," Simeon said in desolation.

Hope crossed Papa Chico's face, and he held up a finger. He said: "My

friend, perhaps you are not experienced. The anger of a woman comes and goes very quickly."

Simeon shook his head. He said: "She don't get mad but once. There ain't nothing I can say to her."

"She has struck you?"

"Like to killed me," Simeon said.

"But that is good," Papa Chico said doubtfully. "She has wept?"

"Not a lick."

"But that is bad," Papa Chico said.

"She's just done with me," Simeon said.

Papa Chico sat down on the piano bench, the only other chair in the room. He said: "Let me ask, it is something you have done? Perhaps you can undo it. It is something you have not done? Perhaps you can do it."

"Well, I bought a horse," Simeon said. "I bought that quarterhorse."

"Ah, that is a magnificent beast!" Papa Chico exclaimed.

"I give two hundred and ninety-five dollars for it," Simeon said. "Mary Ann had been saving it up."

"But that was little enough for him, indeed! You can sell him at once, and return to her the money!"

"That's what I thought," Simeon said. "But he died."

Papa Chico put his hands up in the air, and his eyes crossed and uncrossed. He said: "That cannot be!"

"He went kind of crazy," Simeon said. "He kicked the outhouse apart and tore down Mary Ann's wash and trompled on it, and killed a couple of turkeys, and then he fell down and died. It was a fit or a heart attack or something."

Papa Chico sighed deeply. He said: "Eh, the devil!"

"She says I can't stand prosperity," Simeon said. "She says she's tried her best to stick it out, but she says now she's going to get off the merry-go-round while she still can."

"This is all impossibly sad," Papa Chico said.

"The hell of it is, she's right," Simeon said. He got up and walked around the room, rubbing his head. "I ain't worth two hoots and a holler. I thought I would be, once Mary Ann took me up. I had her to help me." He glanced at the bedroom door.

"That will be no good," Papa Chico said softly. "She will have her fingers in her ears."

"I'm shiftless, like she said," Simeon said bitterly. "I beat myself. I can't win, for losing."

"In a case like this, there is nothing to do but be miserable," Papa Chico said.

"I had some big plans," Simeon said. "I was going to throw in with John Dake next month, with all the money I could scrape up. He's got some good sign, but he needs to develop it; and then we could sell out to the Company and be rich. Mary Ann didn't want me to do that, either. All she says is keep my job and save money, keep my job and save money, keep my job and save money!" He kicked the door open savagely, and looked out at the red haze of fire hanging over the town.

"But tell her you will do so, by all means," Papa Chico advised wisely.

"I already have, but she says I won't," Simeon said. "And I reckon I wouldn't."

"It is a pity," Papa Chico said. "Happiness is such a simple thing. One needs only to accept it."

"I don't know what to do," Simeon said.

"If we had some wine, we might drink it," Papa Chico said.

THERE WAS a sound of gunfire from the town. There were several shots.

Simeon said in a puzzled way: "That's somebody shooting."

"It is as I feared," Papa Chico said. "Someone is taking advantage of the fire to rob the bank."

"Let's get down there," Simeon said. "Maybe I can get killed."

"In a case like this, there is nothing to do but pray to God the Patrón," Papa Chico said.

I started out after them, but Simeon roared, "Get back in there!" and I went back in the house. Papa Chico cranked his car and jumped in as Simeon drove away. I started out of the house again, and Mary Ann came out of the bedroom and called after me. I told her the bank was being robbed.

She said: "But Simeon didn't take his gun. I've got it."

I said: "No, ma'am."

"He'll be killed!" Mary Ann said, with a wild look.

I told her that's what he had said.

"Oh, the big oaf!" Mary Ann said furiously.

"Papa Chico's got a shotgun in his car," I said.

"You come with me, Bud," Mary Ann said. She ran out of the house, her hair flying. I went with her. She ran fast, for a woman, but she got out of breath quickly and had to stop for a minute, and then went on, walking, and running a few steps every now and then.

Once she said: "Oh, he's hateful!" I said, "Who?" and she said: "Your uncle Simeon. He's worse than a child."

I started to tell her some of the things he had told Papa Chico, and she said she had heard what he told Papa Chico.

She said: "I should have known better in the first place. Everyone told me." We went on and came to the corner where the main street began. She said: "I just want him to know that nothing will ever make me change my mind. He can promise and promise and promise. Not even if he gets killed, or anything else." We could see the blaze of the fire now, and someone ran across it about a block away, and there was the slam of a pistol shot and then the roar of a shotgun. Mary Ann stopped and clutched my arm and said, "Merciful heavens!" and sobbed. She said, "The fool!" and began to run again.

We came up to the front of the bank. The bank and the grocery next to it seemed to be all on fire. Someone was crawling around foolishly in the dust of the street. It was Papa Chico.

Mary Ann gave him a look of horror.

I ran on around the corner of the bank and bumped into Simeon. He was holding the shotgun to his shoulder and looking away down the dark of the side-street, and clicking the hammer over and over again on an empty shell. There was a flash that could have been a yard away or a block away, and Simeon coughed and sat down. Mary Ann cried out: "Simeon!" She was following right behind me.

Simeon hugged himself and rolled over on the ground. Mary Ann fell

on her knees beside him, and then she looked down the side-street, and raised Simeon's revolver with both hands and fired it six times. I couldn't see anything. Then there was silence. For no reason at all I took off and ran down the side-street. I heard a car start up on the arroyo road but by the time I got to the turn, it was gone.

When I came back, I found a boot in the road. It was a cowboy boot, but the heel was missing. Just the same, it was quite a prize. I figured it had belonged to the bandit. Simeon wasn't dead when I got back to the bank corner. It turned out he had got his chew of tobacco stuck in his throat, and had choked until he had almost passed out. Chewing tobacco was another thing Mary Ann had made him promise not to do.

Papa Chico was all right too. He was still crawling around in the street. He was picking up some money the bandit had dropped. He said the bandit was Johnny Fourteen. He said Simeon had shot at Johnny Fourteen with the shotgun, and hit him in the hand.

FOR anyone to shoot at Johnny Fourteen and not be killed seemed to me a remarkable feat, but the town fired Simeon from his job of marshal anyway. The bank guard, a fat man named O'Dell, said he had opened the side door of the bank when the fire started out in back, and Johnny Fourteen had come in with a gun and made him open the safe, and then laid his head open with a pistol barrel. He said Johnny Fourteen took all the time in the world, and if the marshal had got there in a hurry, he could have caught him and stopped the robbery. He told the story around that maybe Simeon was one of Johnny Fourteen's gang. . . .

The bank got back some money, the bag of money that Johnny Fourteen had dropped in the street. Simeon said it was half of what he took. But payrolls weren't dealt out the next day, anyhow, and that was what cost Simeon his job more than anything else. Everyone blamed him because they didn't get paid on time. A committee from the Company and the merchants and the bank came around in the morning and told him he was fired. They gave his job to the bank guard, O'Dell.

The man from the bank said: "Papa Chico has admitted you sat here and talked for ten minutes after you knew the bank was on fire. That's criminal negligence, regardless of what you did later. I don't know what the directors will decide about the reward you've asked for the money you saved, but I'm recommending that they give you nothing."

"I didn't ask for a reward," Simeon said.



O'Dell said he had opened the side door when the fire started and Johnny had come in and made him open the safe.

"Your deputy put in the claim," the man from the bank said. He went on to say that he would not pay Simeon his fee due for the past month, either, but would hold it until the directors told him what to do with it. Simeon said he could tell him what to do with it, and the man from the bank said he would advise him further to keep his mouth shut. So Simeon swung on him and knocked him through the door, and the committee left.

Simeon wasn't bothered by being fired, because Mary Ann had left at dawn to ride a Company truck to Las

Vegas and go home to her family, and he didn't care what happened after that. He whittled out a heel for the boot I had found, and I wore the boot. He said it was Johnny Fourteen's boot, all right. He said he had noticed Johnny Fourteen's boot very carefully when he had shot at him. It wasn't much too big for me. I stuffed some paper in the toe, and wore it fine. In the forenoon we got our stuff together, and that afternoon we went back home to my grandfather's. Simeon swapped the piano for a very handsome saddle that he carried on his shoulder.

It was after dark when we got home. My grandfather was sitting on the veranda. He got up and went to the door and said to someone inside, "Here he is."

We went in, and Mary Ann was in the parlor with my grandmother. Mary Ann had been crying. Her eyes were wet.

She said to Simeon: "Don't look so darned idiotic."

Simeon swallowed. He said: "I didn't look for you to be here."

"I heard after I left that you'd been fired," Mary Ann said, as if that explained everything.

Simeon kept on swallowing. He looked pretty foolish, at that. He said: "Listen, honey, I'll do anything you say."

"No, you won't," Mary Ann said. She began to cry. She said: "I can't help it, either." My grandmother sniffed and wiped her eyes. My grandfather came in and said: "Bud, go wash your hands."

The next morning my grandfather was stomping mad again. I thought it was because Simeon and Mary Ann would be staying with us, but it was because they were leaving.

"How they going to go?" he asked my grandmother. "Walk? Clean to some other State?"

"It wouldn't hurt them any," my grandmother said. "Mary Ann says she wants him far enough away from here that he won't be able to come running home every time he stubs his toe, and I think she's right. If that boy is ever going to get out on his own, he's got to do it now."

"Do they have to leave this morning?" my grandfather shouted. "What they going to use to eat dinner on? You said Mary Ann wouldn't let him take any money from you. Does he have to start out on his own two feet without any dinner?"

"Yes, he does," my grandmother said. "If he stays to dinner, he'll stay to supper, and he'll stay all year, because it's easy to do. I don't know how they're going to live, either. That's their problem. You just keep still and let them go."

"What's the all-fired rush?" my grandfather demanded. "If he'd wait awhile, he could at least make a few dollars to get started on. It's all right for her to think about the future; but the future don't have to start next week nor yet next year. They're young enough."

"It might interest you to know that Mary Ann's future has started already," my grandmother said, waving a spoon in my grandfather's face. "She's going to have a baby, and that's why she's so concerned, and I don't blame her in the least."

My grandfather swelled up some and then exploded. He said: "What the hell will that saddle tramp do with a kid? They'll all starve to death! Why, it's a crime!"

"There's no need for you to talk in that language," my grandmother said. "And you might send Bud out to the corral."

When it was time for Simeon and Mary Ann to leave, Papa Chico drove up in his car. He drove through the fence and ran a wheel through my grandmother's lilac bush. His eyes were crossed.

He came up to Simeon and took a wad of money out of his pocket.

He said: "The bank gives this to you, my friend." He straightened

out the money and put it in Simeon's hand. He said: "It is out of gratitude, and gratitude is noble, as in the story of the priest of La Bajada which you know so well. It is most beautiful to be back to my home," he said to my grandfather and my grandmother. He hiccuped and sat down on the veranda step.

Simeon said: "The bank gave me this?" He looked at the money.

"With his thanks, and it is well said that the thanks of Mr. Money are always powerful. There was one dollar for each twenty returned to them, which makes the unbelievable figure of a thousand dollars, but I have taken one-half for myself. You are traveling?"

"I guess those directors threw a switch on that manager, then," Simeon said. "I sure didn't expect this. Why, with five hundred dollars we can put our foot in the middle of the road in good shape."

"My family and I will be happy to join you," Papa Chico said. "You have brought us fortune, and I wish to travel also."

Mary Ann said: "Papa Chico, are you sure the bank gave you that money?"

"Of a great certainty," Papa Chico said. "There was a grand ceremony, only this morning. My family awaited in the automobile; we were preparing sadly to leave from Alamitos, when

the Company manager appeared, the one with the white hair, very excited, and with him Mr. Molino, the one who operates the telegraph, wearing a suit of clothes of gray cloth, and new shoes which he polished on the toes by brushing first one and then the other against the calves of the legs. They called to me that I must come and bring my friend Simeon, to accept the gratitude-money those of the bank had ordered from Albuquerque. I replied that my friend Simeon had departed. They—"

"You don't need to tell it all," Mary Ann said.

"An official message was given me, but I have misplaced it," Papa Chico said.

"It seems too good to be true," Mary Ann said. "I can't really believe it."

"It's no more than they should have done," my grandmother said. She took the money out of Simeon's hand and gave it to Mary Ann, who put it in her purse.

Papa Chico, peering at his car, observed: "Eh, it has crept among the flowers." He looked furtively at my grandmother, and fell off the step when he turned his head. He went to sleep on the ground.

After a while Simeon and Mary Ann said good-by and got Papa Chico into his car, and Simeon drove away. My grandmother was excited about the money, but my grandfather had been silent and suspicious. He kept saying it didn't sound right.

A week later a check came from the bank for Simeon. It was for ten dollars. A letter with it said the directors had voted that amount to Simeon as the reward he had requested for recovering twenty-three thousand dollars of the forty thousand taken from the bank in the holdup. My grandfather cross-questioned me until I told about how Papa Chico had been crawling around in the street in the light of the fire picking up the money Johnny Fourteen had dropped. It seemed pretty clear that Papa Chico had held out on the bank when he had returned the money.

My grandfather flew into a great rage, saying Simeon was a thief, but he didn't do anything about it. We hadn't heard from Simeon and Mary Ann, and didn't know then where they were. My grandfather framed the check and hung it on the wall; and he used to say in later years, after Simeon had gone into politics, that the check would be worth a thousand votes on the dollar.

But he became very proud of Simeon, as time went on. When Simeon was elected Governor of his adopted State, in the last year of my grandfather's life, I overheard my grandfather saying that he'd always known the boy was a born politician.

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*Illustrated by
Loren Wilford*



Damages to Punkins

CAPE COD FOLKS HAVE VERY INDIVIDUAL WAYS—EVEN WHEN
THEY HAVE TO DEAL WITH OVERLY SHARP REAL ESTATE MEN.

by RICHARD HOWELLS WATKINS

JIM DANE had been an honest man all his life, and he was getting restless. It seemed like being honest was no way to act.

It got a man looked down on by these purple-panted, picture-necktied fellows who swelled around East Quidnett as if the whole town was their front yard and kept grinning secretly to themselves as if they expected a man to say "I vum!" any minute.

There were, in particular, this Square Bill Hyle, the real-estater, and his brother, Honest Rob Hyle, the one that was fresh out of jail, and helped his brother because his ticket as a lawyer had been suspended.

Not Capemen born. Each of them had a shiny 1948 automobile that could make a whole row of solid, white-painted East Quidnett houses look shabby just by driving past them. And worse than that, they kept pecking away at Jim. They knew he was the only fisherman in Quidnett harbor to have anything like ten thousand dollars tucked away. Acted like they cal'lated that it was their money, and he, an ignorant swab, was keeping them out of it.

Not a month went by, June to October, but that Square Bill Hyle, arm-patting, organ-voiced and shoving out his front, drove out to the Neck.

"Square Bill Hyle," he'd always say, introducing himself with his thumb. Then he'd chuckle and look modest. "Square Bill! That's what they call me, for some reason."

"Beats me, too," Jim Dane said once, but you couldn't insult Square Bill with a belaying pin.

Out of the corner of his mouth, like somebody was hid to listen in the sand dunes, he'd tell Jim Dane about some piece of property just crying to be bought. Or he'd drag out a chance to buy a sleeper in Canadian penny gold-mine stock—likely one his brother Honest Rob Hyle had time to think up in jail. Honest Rob, they

called that one, so he'd claim. For some reason.

It made Jim Dane feel low as an eel's heel, the way they were dead sure they could get him to bite on something. Less wits than a quahog, they gave him.

They kept coming, and they kept prospering in East Quidnett, too, even in times when honest real-estaters were getting taller faster'n they were getting rounder. They needed to be brought up with a round turn.

Jim Dane was thinking about them the day the stranger kicked Punkins, his tortoise-shell cat. The thinking came in handy in fixing this fellow. At least it seemed like that to Jim, first off.

THE man was youngish, sandy-haired, mild-looking except for a sharpish nose. He came along the plank walk that Jim had built out of driftwood over the sand from the road to the deck around his cabin. . . . Cabin, not shanty, Mister! Jim liked things compact, having followed the sea a good while, so you stepped onto this narrow raised deck, then into the front door of the cabin, which had all the fittings any reasonable man needed, through it onto a husky pier, and right down a ladder into Jim's boat alongside in eight feet of water. Everything shipshape and handy.

Well, this fellow, Cal Butterfield, his name turned out to be, came along the planks, and there was Punkins, lying in the hottest patch of late September sunlight where the sunflowers cut off most of the northeast wind. She had her paws rigged in under her all *sereno*.

Now Punkins always reckoned she owned the place. And this Cal Butterfield was big and able enough to step over her, so she didn't move. But that wasn't Cal Butterfield's notion, at all. He took a quick look at the cabin and missed seeing Jim Dane stirring himself up a mess of chowder at the galley stove. So he hooked a foot under Punkins and lifted right smart.

Punkins went up a foot or two, clawing and spitting, made a good landing, looked after Cal Butterfield with murder in her green eyes and then settled down again quick, before the plank she'd got warmed up could cool off again. A she philosopher, Punkins was.

At sight of what went on, Jim Dane dropped his spoon and headed for the door with his fingers bunching into fists. He drove down his foot square onto Punkins' enamelware dish on the floor, went skating along off balance for six feet, and then thudded to the floor a lot unhandier than Punkins had landed.

Now one sock in the eye, like Punkins getting kicked, made Jim Dane

mad, but two in a row made him thoughtful. He was a Capeman.

Jim hadn't sprung any butts, but he got up sort of slowly. When the stranger knocked, he opened the door, and there was Cal Butterfield. He smiled so broad his eyes got slitted and shiny.

"Mr. Dane?" He got hold of Jim's hand before Jim could open his fingers. He shook it affectionate, even if it was still a fist.

Jim grunted cautiously, not quite sure what he'd do to this young fellow.

"Your cat?" He nodded back at Punkins. "A beautiful animal, Mr. Dane."

This time Jim just growled.

"Cal Butterfield," said the visitor, pointing to himself like Square Bill did. "I'm driving along the coast looking for a summer place and dodging high-priced real-estaters."

He pointed slanting across the road, toward the Bartlett house on the ocean side of the long neck that helped make Quidnett Bay. "Something about the size of that little place." His voice dropped. "Help me get one cheap, and I'll slip you yours."

Jim looked over at the Bartlett place, the only one near him. The house set right on the edge of the beach on account of winter nor'easters cutting away the dunes.

"You speak English, don't you?" Cal Butterfield said after a minute.

Maybe that was when Jim should have started running him off, but he didn't. Cal Butterfield raised his dander. Even his clothes, sort of sissy-colored and smooth, irked Jim. They reminded him of the way that Square Bill Hyle and Honest Rob Hyle rigged themselves out when they were baited for suckers.

JIM DANE got a fast idea. It dazzled him. He reached for the key hanging beside the door.

"Go look at it," he said, shoving the key at Butterfield. "I can let you have it for twelve thousand dollars."

And he shut the door so he wouldn't brain the man. Old Major Stuyvesant of Boston, who owned the Bartlett place, had left that key with Jim so he could keep an eye on it during the winter, same as usual. But not three days before this Square Bill Hyle had been around, trying to sell the house to Jim for ten thousand—that ten thousand Bill Hyle knew he had in the bank and kept coming after.

Major Stuyvesant must have got worried about waking up some summer morning with the Atlantic Ocean in his lap.

Jim Dane had just smiled sort of sour at Square Bill, and told him that, having been a seafaring man, he knew where he could get salt water without buying it.

But now came this cat-kicking Cal Butterfield, and in a wink Jim had made that offer, as if he owned the place.

"Well," said Jim Dane to himself, on the inside of the door, "if a man's got to be dishonest to keep from being pestered an' looked down on, that Cal Butterfield's the swab I want to skin."

So he went back to his chowder, which needed some standing by. Within an hour and a half Cal Butterfield was back. This time he stepped over Punkins. He asked a lot of questions, and finally he said: "It's near the ocean, isn't it?"

"I'll guarantee there ain't another house round Quidnett any closer," Jim Dane said, mighty hearty. Even going crooked, like that, he wasn't the kind of man to lie when the truth was better.

Cal Butterfield shuffled his feet on the deck.

"Let's call it eleven thousand, even," he said and unfurled a pile of twenty-dollar bills. "I'll give you a hundred dollars for a thirty-day option on it at that price. Cash!"

Jim Dane was took aback with everything standing. He hadn't reckoned evil doing could get results that fast. But he shook his head.

"Twelve thousand—and two hundred for the option," he said. "October's a fine time to sell that place."

He cast a look to the eastward, where the sunshine was getting a little thin and watery. Today was a fine time to sell that place, before it drifted down toward Buzzard's Bay. A nor'easter was making.

Butterfield talked around, but Jim Dane stood firm. He wasn't going crooked for less. Kicking Punkins ought to come high. So at last Cal Butterfield gave in, and paid the two hundred, and they fixed up a paper and got Vic, the old Portygee down the road, and his daughter to witness it. Butterfield went off, saying he had to drive to Providence right away.

Jim Dane watched him down the road, rubbed Punkins' ears, rubbed his own ear, finished a job or two and climbed into his boat to go get an option at nine or ten thousand over at Square Bill Hyle's office in East Quidnett. Punkins stretched and came along at the last minute.

It was a mite rough in the bay. The nor'easter was working up. . . .

When Jim got to the office, Square Bill Hyle patted his shoulder and rolled his voice like an organ and stuck out his front all very friendly. And Honest Rob Hyle got on the other side of Jim, smooth as slush, winding up his mustache as usual.

"Oh, the Bartlett place?" Square Bill said. "Sorry, Jim. I can't give you an option on that. I sold the place for Major Stuyvesant yesterday."

The bottom went out of Jim Dane's stomach. "Sold it?" he said. "Sold it? Who—who'd you sell it to?"

"Nice young fellow. Maybe you can peddle him some clams now and then. Name's Hyle, Robert Hyle, known in this community as Honest Rob Hyle."

"That's what they call me, for some reason," Honest Rob said.

They'd got him. Jim Dane spread his legs, as if he stood on a lively deck, to keep from keelin' over. In a clove hitch, he was. He'd contracted to sell something he didn't own. Wasn't that fraud?

Honest Rob didn't say another word, just went on winding up his mustache above his grinning mouth.

Square Bill waited a full minute to let it sink in. Then he pawed Jim Dane's sleeve, dropped his voice way down and said:

"But he's kind-hearted as well as honest, is Rob Hyle, Jim. If you've fallen in love with the little place, I might induce him to let you have it reasonable. Fifteen thousand, let's say. . . . Or else, Jim!"

Jim Dane stumbled out of there. He was still in a Grand Banks fog as he stopped by Jed Newcombe's for a pound o' cat-meat for Punkins. He made it to the telephone booth, and called Major Stuyvesant in Boston.

"That's right, Jim," the Major said. "I got scared and offered it to this Square Bill Hyle a week ago."

"Offered? Then—"

"He sent a fellow round not ten minutes ago and closed the deal, Jim."

"Ten minutes ago!"

"For eight thousand. Maybe I'm a blamed old fool."

"You ain't alone, Major," Jim said and hung up. He walked toward the dock by way of the town lockup just to prove he wasn't afraid of the dang' place.

As he was crossing the bay, he saw clearly in what an air-tight barrel they had him, and right when he was fixing to show how smart he was. He didn't doubt this Cal Butterfield was in on the game with them. Square Bill hadn't bought till he was on the hook.

Well, he'd contracted to sell Butterfield another man's home for twelve thousand. A crime, that was, because of the two hundred. They'd squeeze him for fifteen. He let his eyes rove seaward as he realized that after he'd scraped together all that money somehow, and bought the place, he was stuck with it. And any northeaster—even this one making up now—could make driftwood to leeward out of his fifteen-thousand-dollar house.

"No more chance 'n an oyster in a stew!" Jim Dane told Punkins. "Gettin' square for that kick you took is



Butterfield hooked a foot under Punkins and lifted her right smart. She made a good landing and looked at Butterfield with murder in her eyes.



They'd wait for a big breaker to hit the beach, then Victor would heave a bucketful at the window as Jim swung a bag of sand.

goin' to cost me even my boat. Or jail."

Punkins just got in his lee and washed the salt off her face from the top of a lipper that had took him unexpected. She wasn't the worrying kind, Punkins wasn't.

Neither was Jim Dane. But he made a big start on the habit later that day. Honest Rob drove up to the Bartlett house, and then Cal Butterfield—he hadn't gone to Providence—arrived with a couple of bags and went in. And then, an hour before sundown, Sid Schofield, who was the Quidnett chief of police, though most people paid him no mind, came by. All three of them stood on the Bartlett porch and looked over at Jim's place, talking under their breaths. Talkin' about what?

The sweat dripped off Jim Dane's eyebrows as he went on mending a bait net. They were really bearing down. Wanted action right away, and they were showing him they meant to get it.

Sid Schofield was always hopping hot to arrest somebody. It propped Sid up better'n vitamins, arresting folks.

Cornered like that, Jim Dane began to get his back up, just like Punkins. But he couldn't work out how to fight them. They had the Commonwealth of Massachusetts standing up alongside them, and he couldn't see that he had anything, not even a good conscience. But still he didn't feel like quitting yet.

"As for payin' fifteen thousand for't, it ain't fitten to do it," he told Pun-

kins. "It ain't principle to let 'em triumph. I wouldn't be the first to go to jail in this town for principle."

Some comfort, but not much. Folks outside wouldn't cal'late principle was what he was in jail for.

After a while Sid Schofield went away. Of course Jim Dane hadn't expected that Sid would get to do any arresting that early. Jim lit his pipe. Probably they hadn't told Sid anything yet. Sid'd come anywheres just t'be called Chief, and buttered up and maybe given a drink, and he'd been brought there to scare the b'jeebers out of Jim. They wanted the money out of his pocket, and it'd be easier to get it if there weren't any bars between them. Of course if he wouldn't play, then it would be bars.

After Sid had gone, the other two kept standing on the porch, sort of rocking back and forth on their heels and waiting. But Jim Dane kept on mending the bait net and did his sweating on the sly.

Just as it was getting dark—it closed in early that night because the northeaster had come across the sun—Square Bill Hyle drove up in something even shinier than his brother's. Maybe the meek are due to inherit the earth sometime, but that particular season the Hyles had their whack of cars, at least.

The three of them moved around to the ocean side. Getting on to low water then, so there was quite a stretch of beach between them, and the sea making up. City men, all three, and they didn't face the wind long nor squarely either; they went inside.

JIM kept on at the net, mostly by feel, because he'd got a sudden liking for outdoors and fresh air. It had begun to drizzle when Square Bill came out and crossed the road, shoving his front ahead of him like the bow fender of a tug.

He reached for Jim's hand with both his, but missed. He rolled out his voice like an organ working on a full head of wind:

"Jim, we give you till tomorrow noon. But just between you and me, old man, things might be cheaper to-night. A word to the wise, eh?"

Jim couldn't find words.

Square Bill nodded three or four times, did a few friendly little chest rumblings and tried for a pat on Jim's arm. Then he started away. Over his shoulder he said:

"Rob'll be spending the night there with young Mr. Butterfield on purpose. Don't hesitate to break in."

He drove off. Jim felt hollow and weighted, like a ship stowed with railroad iron in the lower holds. He went into his cabin. Seemed like jail in there. But he got to wondering. They were putting on the pressure

too fast to be smooth. Where was the need for speed? They'd stew more money out by keeping him over a low fire for ten days.

The nor'easter gave a *whoo!* around his eaves and a *whoosh!* down his chimney, and suddenly he caught onto their reason.

HE started fixing up some fish for Punkins. The cat nearly had to claw the door off the icebox to remind him her whack of meat was due that night. He stopped dead, with the meat in his hand, facing nor'east.

After a minute he set the plate on the table to go across and stare at the tidetable tacked to the wall. High water at 12:32 that night.

Punkins looked him over, disgusted, jumped to the table and ate the fish, taking her time over it, and Jim was still staring at that line of type when she gave her tongue a final whirl around her face and went to sleep.

Jim caught up his slicker and sou'wester, slung 'em on and went scudding down the road to Portygee Vic's.

"I need you to lend a hand at eleven-thirty tonight, Vic," he said to the old clamdigger. "Come to my house, will you?"

The seams in Vic's brown face doubled in depth.

"No more signin'?"

"No. Work!" said Jim. "Wear your heavy-weather gear."

Vic twisted his neck to the nor'east and curled his eyebrow. "Might need it," he said.

"Don't be noisy about coming," Jim said.

When he went down the road, he heard Honest Rob and Butterfield slamming the shutters on the weather side of the Bartlett place, snugging down for the night. They had a nice inviting light going in the parlor, but Jim didn't call.

At eleven-thirty Portygee Vic came. Jim Dane, listening in the dark cabin, heard his boots on the plank walk. He picked up a gunnysack and two buckets, opened the door and stepped out into the wind.

"You stand anchor watch tonight," he said to Punkins, who was blocking the door while she looked over the weather. He shut her in.

Raindrops pattered on his slicker like birdshot. He put the handle of a shovel into Vic's hands, turned him round and led him into the gale.

"Who we bury?" Vic asked, sort of nervous.

"You—if you don't keep your hatch battened," Jim growled.

By then the lights were out in the Bartlett house. In the hurrying wind they nearly walked into the two parked cars out front.

Jim skirted the house, and Vic followed him around onto the open

beach. Only an hour before high water, and the sea was really rolling in. There was a dim touch of gray hissing and wavering around their feet, and then to seaward something black, that they felt rather than saw, would loom up. All of a sudden the line of blackness would rip open into ghastly white, like a whole graveyard of ghosts charging at them, and then *crash—blam!* and the ghosts, flattened down, would come tearing along toward their legs. And right away another black thing rising up.

A big breaking sea on a black night. Vic got a mite restive, standing there. Jim waded into the backwash, filled both buckets and retreated, right lively.

He led Vic up the beach a few steps toward the Bartlett house. It was pretty close to the wavering fringe of foam, but still a good few feet above it.

Jim set down the buckets. "Fill that gunnysack a quarter full o' sand," he muttered in Vic's ear.

"I do not understand—" Then Vic piped down as Jim poked his ribs with a finger stiff as a belaying pin. He started the job.

Jim stepped over to the nearest window of the house, took a strong hold on the shutter and waited for a good gust of wind to come driving in from the sea. As it whooshed up the beach he helped the shutter rattle. Not too much, but a good hefty rattle.

Then he hustled back to Vic.

"Look!" he said, picking up the gunnysack of sand. "I'm a big husky comber, see, and you're a dollop off my top. Grab holt o' them buckets. You're a wavetop. Get it?"

Vic wrung his hands, but he stayed polite.

"I have gone crazy," he told Jim, picking up the buckets.

"Neither you nor me," Jim muttered back. "We're putting a top dressing on a stiff nor'easter, that's all. Benefit of a couple o' lubbers roosting uneasy this close to a rough sea. Come on!"

He led the way to the weather side of the Bartlett house, waited for the crash and swash of a sea, and swung the heavy sandbag, not too hard, at the lowest line of clapboards.

The house shook. Jim grabbed a bucket from Vic and splashed water hard against the side.

Vic got the notion. Mighty relieved, he was.

"Nobody is nuts, then," he said.

He waited for the next breaker to slam on the beach and then flung the other bucketful at the house.

Jim backed away. A gust of wind came howling in from seaward. Jim's hair hackled up on his head all of a sudden as the gust rose to a shrill shriek right in his ear.

"Airing up!" he mumbled, sort of shying.

Next minute he realized that Victor, with his fingers in his mouth, had topped that blast with an eerie, home-made whistle.

"You get onto things fast," Jim said.

Through the cracks in the dried-out shutters a light showed in the house. They retreated and waited. The light burned for ten minutes, then went out.

With the sandbag and more water they crept up to the house. Vic rattled a shutter. He put more drama, somehow, into it than Jim could. Likely the Portygee in him. Then, with the buckets and gunnysack, they sent another big comber rolling up the beach and slapping the house before it died. The light came on again and stayed on. But nobody was doing any looking out.

The tide wasn't yet full. Jim had to ride Vic's neck to keep him from laying on the storm too fast. Things had to get worse, but gradual.

THEY did. Pretty fast they developed team work with the sea and with themselves. They'd wait for a big breaker to hit the beach behind them and count five. Victor would heave a bucketful right at a window as Jim swung a bag of sand at the sill of the house. The bag hit like green water does and the underpinnings of the old house got a booming wallop that made it tremble all over.

They got wetter with salt sweat inside their slickers an' sou'westers than with salt water from outside. But by then they were part of the storm. They got so they couldn't let a big one thunder up on the beach without bringing it right smack up against the wall of the Bartlett house. Rhythm! They had it, especially Vic.

Along toward high water Jim began to be surprised that the real seas didn't break closer to the house. He and Vic had to do most of the work. Jim cal'lated that all those sand dunes torn down had formed shoals off shore that cut down the size of the combers.

And then came the bad break. A blast of wind bore down on them and Victor, shrilling with it, grabbed hold of a shutter. He put his Portygee soul into the rattling and all of a sudden the shutter came loose in his hands. The wind blew a corner right smack through the window glass as it dropped.

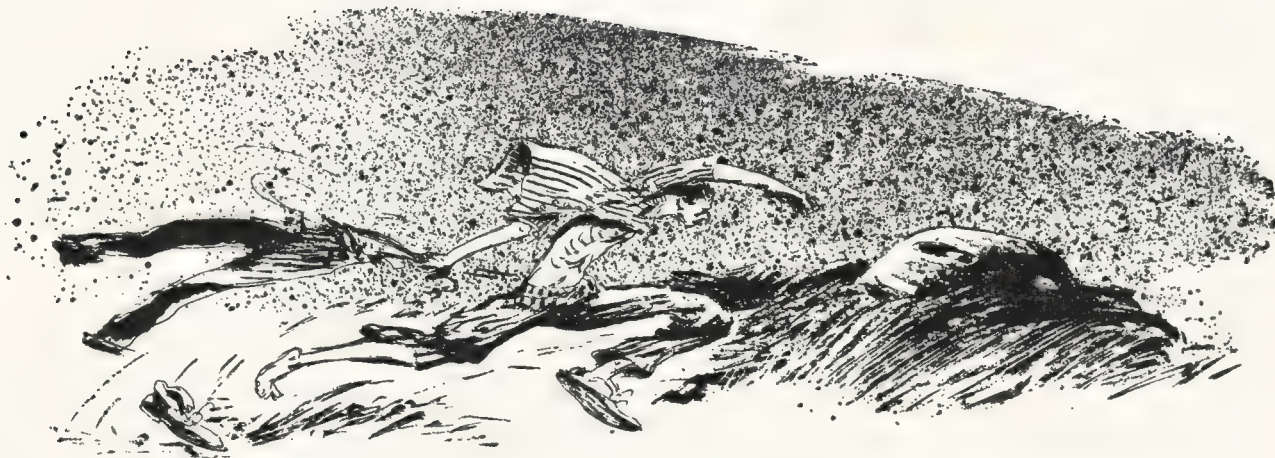
"Duck!" Jim groaned. It was more a prayer than an order and Vic dropped out of sight like an anchor taking the ground. They lay for a second, sure they'd be spotted.

Jim wormed up beside Vic.

"Eel it away!" he whispered. "Get going!"

They went worming around the side of the house. And then Jim froze up motionless, staring.

The starter of Honest Rob's car had begun whirring and next second



Butterfield came streaking out in his pajamas, "Rob! Rob!" he squalled. "Wait! Don't leave me!"

its lights jumped up. Before the car could move Cal Butterfield came streaking out of the house in his pajamas. His pants were trailing in one hand and he was sort of making swimming motions with the other.

"Rob! Rob!" he squalled. "Wait! Don't leave me!"

He made it to the car and tore the door open before Rob Hyle could start. Next minute the car was belting it through the puddles on the way to town as if a Bible deluge was on its tail.

JIM sagged against the house and the gale wasn't much better than a summer calm when it came to cooling him off.

Victor was giggling, panting and muttering foreign.

"Oh, Jeem!" he gasped between breaths. "We put out a ver' tough nor'easter, you an' me!"

Jim heaved himself up, stubborn as the gale. "Come on!" he said, though he wasn't moving so fast himself. "The nor'easter's undercutting a corner o' the house while we got the chance!"

He didn't forget to douse a bucket of water through the broken window while Vic was taking his turn with the shovel, slicing the sand away from the foundation. . . .

Likely Square Bill Hyle didn't sleep much that night after those other two fellows hit his place over in town. Anyhow Square Bill was on deck with them over at the Bartlett place next morning before Jim Dane felt like turning out of his bunk, in spite of Punkins doing a heel an' toe on his chest an' asking how about breakfast. By then the tide was dead low. But the three could look at a smooth cut under the weather corner of the house and at the seawater sopping the bedroom with the broken window.

It didn't pay off for Square Bill just to cuss out Honest Rob and Butterfield for midnight cowards. He blocked Jim's line of vision with a car and all three of them set to with

shovels. They threw sand in around the foundation faster'n Vic and Jim had dug it out. Then Square Bill came banging on Jim's door.

"Time's gettin' short," he said, soon's Jim let him in. He'd dropped the patting and organ-voicing and swelling that day. "You going to take that Bartlett place for \$15,000 so you can meet your honest obligations? Or do I have to get Sid Schofield here so Cal Butterfield can have you put in jail for fraud?"

"You got to get Sid Schofield here to put me in jail," Jim said. He sat down, groaning. "Seems like I could do with a rest, anyhow."

Square Bill stood there, working his mouth. The nor'easter tuned up in the chimney just then, as if it had only begun to blow.

"I got a good record, not like some," Jim said. "I cal'late they won't keep me in forever, if I go in at all."

"It's not only jail, man!" Square Bill said. "It's coming out again. Think of what the town will—"

"A town that can take you will take me," Jim said, flat. "Go get Sid. He's cheaper'n buyin' that house. How do I know this nor'easter won't—"

"Don't say things like that, Jim!" Square Bill squalled. His voice was shaking like a Bartlett shutter. "Think of the disgrace! Think of your—your— Think of Punkins!"

It was pretty desperate going for him. But Jim rolled a sad eye at the cat and paid a mite more attention.

Square Bill settled down to work on him then. He got wetter'n Jim the night before, just talking. Jim sat there, resting. When Square Bill quit for air Jim said, thoughtfully: "I'll board her out at Portygee Vic's, down the road."

It took Square Bill for the count, that and the way the nor'easter was breezing up and squalling at him down the chimney.

"All right," he said hoarsely and he was hoarse, not putting it on. "Do you want that house for what I paid

Major Stuyvesant for it—ten thousand? 'For your name's sake—for Punkins' sake?"

Another gust was coming. Jim let it hit. "Eight thousand," he said. He kited his head to one side to listen to the wind and then looked across at the Stuyvesant house, sudden.

"Done!" Square Bill sang out, fast. "Sign this memo. Then I'll drive you to my office—"

"I'll sign to buy at eight thousand," Jim said, reluctant. "It's high for a house that close to the sea."

"Your reputation's worth a slight risk!"

Slowly Jim signed on to buy the place for eight. "I favor my boat, even in a nor'easter, more'n I do riding with you," he said, as he gave back the pen. "I'll sail across the bay to the bank an' meet you at your office."

"You'll meet me or Chief Schofield," Square Bill warned.

He left Jim Dane thinking that now all he'd got left was two of the ten thousand Square Bill had been shooting for so long. And the house. But Jim wasn't too happy about that. Not being twins he didn't need it. And selling a house, even cheap, took palaver and fussing. Also this Square Bill had a notion he'd won.

It didn't seem decent, somehow, letting Square Bill think he'd beat out. Jim stood still a while, letting Punkins massage his ankles. In a couple of minutes he started down the road to Portygee Vic's. He told Vic what to do.

"But will he theenk I am that stupid in my head?" Vic asked.

"Sartin to, Vic," Jim Dane said. "Furriners—an' natives—are all stupid to Honest Bill, furriners because they wan't born here, natives because they were. Be sure to act scairt."

Jim sailed over to town, double-reefed, and Punkins stood her watch below, on the bunk. He got the eight thousand out and paid for the house at Square Bill's office.

As Jim came out Cal Butterfield was waiting for him in the outer office and gave him the big horse-laugh.

"If you've got a notion I'm going to buy that shaky hunk of wreckage for twelve thousand—" Cal said and laughed some more. He put a match to his option and let Jim watch it burn.

"I know," Jim said. "In the Hyle gang they call you Conscientious Cal—for some reason. Thanks for the two hundred option-money, anyhow."

As Jim stepped out the door Portygee Vic came along the street. At first sight of Jim, Vic bugged out his eyes, dived in under Square Bill's car and hid there.

Jim Dane walked on along; around the corner he ducked in among the bushes and worked back to the rear window of Square Bill's office. They had Portygee Vic on the carpet in there by then and Vic was doing quite a show. Enjoying himself, talking all over.

"Why I know these man Jim Dane is crazy?" Vic said, shrinking into a corner and squeezing himself small with fright. "I tell you. I fear him. Last night in the storm he burst into my house. He made me come out with him. And what did he make me to do? To attack the house of the Major Stuyvesant! With buckets of water, with rattling of shutters, with whistlings and the thud of sandbags—" "What!" Square Bill bounced out of his chair.

"Crazy!" said Vic. "He force me to deeg the big hole in the sand under the corner of—"

"It wasn't the nor'easter!" Conscientious Cal told Square Bill and got cussed for doing it.

"Nor'easter?" Vic stared, lily-eyed, and Jim listened harder. "No, senhor. Have you not seen the shoals now off shore? There the nor'easter builds up the beach."

Square Bill slapped his head. His eyes built a hot fire under Honest Rob and Conscientious Cal. "That's right! That sandbar! You half-witted—you cowardly sons—"

"The Cape has been here a long time," Vic said. "There it builds up; elsewhere it tears down. But why does these crazy Jim Dane force me to such madness in a gale? I fear him! Why—"

Vic was putting it all over fine. Jim Dane moved. He made time toward the harbor; then slowed way down, shoved his hands in his pockets and dropped his head on his chest.

Square Bill's car slid alongside him and Square Bill jumped out. Also Honest Rob. Square Bill was on the prance.

"You'll go to jail, Dane!" he blazed. "Faking a gale—"

"How'd you find out?" Jim asked. "I shouldn't ha' done it." He shook his head, sad. "I'm on my way now to tell an' give myself up."

"You're lying!" Square Bill roared. He pointed a shaky finger at the jail, that Jim had already walked past.

Jim nodded at the office of the Quiddett Weekly *Herald*, dead ahead. "In there," he said. "Full confession's good for the soul. But I never did want to be s'lectman."

"What the blazes are you raving about?" Square Bill yelled. "You'll be tried for fraud!"

"That's right, but I'm afraid the jury—an' the rest of the natives—will elect me s'lectman when they hear how I put over a homemade nor'easter on you slickers." He shook his head. "I never wanted to be s'lectman," he said.

Square Bill cooled down fast. "S'pose you'll be leavin' town ahead o' the laughter," Jim said. "But I'll have to serve out my term—as s'lectman."

Square Bill was thinking. He had turned blue from holding in.

"Well, I did try a rough one, Mr. Dane," he said. "Can't we—"

"I'm no real-estater," Jim said. "The house is yours for ten thousand—today."

Square Bill went even bluer. "That's two thousand more—"

"Fast figgerin'." Jim moved toward the *Herald* office.

"Wait!" said Square Bill. "Ten thousand! Ten thousand."

"Cheap, considering that beach is buildin' up. Some other real es—"

Square Bill wasn't one to let rage or pride cost him hard money. "Come back to the office," he said.

HALF an hour later Jim Dane put his eight thousand and a certified check for two thousand more in his pocket. "An' not too frisky on the deals after this," he warned. "That nor'easter might leak out yet."

"You're a fine one to talk about frisky deals," Square Bill said through his teeth. He was still a mite purple.

"Been actin' as trustee for Punkins," Jim said. "The profit's for damages rendered."

At the door he turned on them. "You better give me a good wide berth after this," he advised. "Dishonest, Crooked, Unconscientious Jim Dane, they call me—for some reason."

A Story Behind That Name!

I GO and ONO, California. Twin mining-camps—the former recalling a miner's youngster who always said "I go" when his father started for work. The latter is named for the father's response.

Some names might fool you. For example:

BERLIN, Oregon. From Burrell's Inn. . . . Burl Inn. . . . Berlin.

ROMANCE, W. Va. For Mr. Romance Parsons.

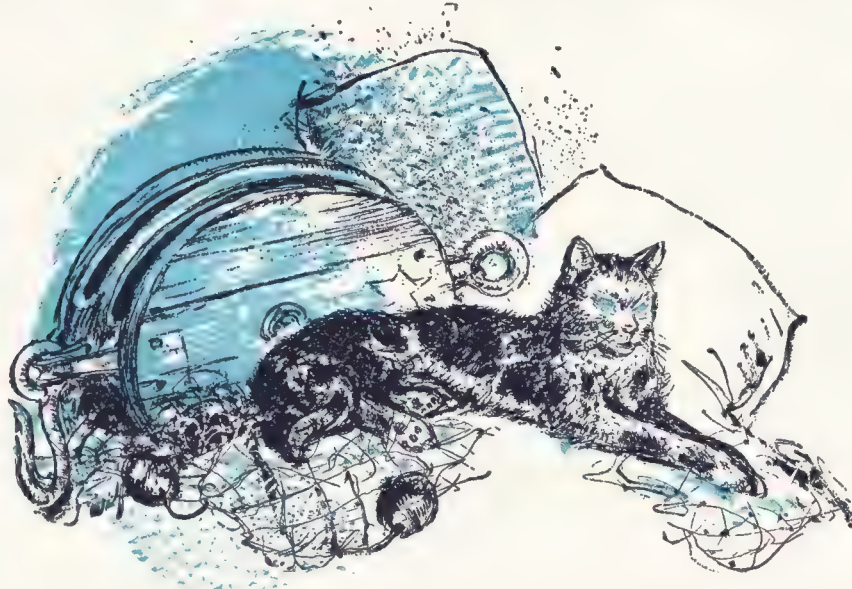
WISE, Va. For Governor Wise. ODD, Va. Post office once located in the Odd Fellows Hall.

BIRD CITY, Kan. For John Bird. SPRAY, Oregon. For John and Mary Spray.

MIST, Oregon. For prevailing atmospheric conditions.

AUBURN, Washington. At first this city was named for Lt. Slaughter, an Army officer who fell while fighting Indians in the region. When the railroad came to Slaughter, civic-minded residents petitioned the Legislature for a change, claiming that it was embarrassing and degrading to hear the hotel-boy shout to debarking train passengers, "Right this way to the Slaughter House!" Petition granted.

—By Ed Dembitz



Milk Run to

AS the huge cargo plane swept her weight off the runway and tucked her wheels away with the familiar wheezing grind, Cliff Ames suddenly realized he had been briefed for this mission more than four years before.

It was as clear as though it had happened only that morning. They had all been assembled in the War Room for the special everyone knew was overdue, one they'd been fearing for weeks. There was the usual screening of chatter when the Air Executive rolled up the big shade that covered the wall map. There was a clap of silence when they saw the long string of scarlet worsted stretching from just outside Norwich, across the entrance to the Channel, straining its way across Holland and supported by red Main Effort pins, coursed its way into Germany and came to a knotted halt outside Berlin.

A sibilant whistle marked the point the eyes had reached. This was the Big-B. The fearsome strand riding as straight as a cross-bolt flight, could have written the word *Danger* and brought no deeper fears.

"The station is shut down as of 06-hundred hours today," the Air Executive said as an opener. Cliff could remember Colonel Bartley Croft with photographic clarity. Croft had left an arm somewhere in '40 with the RAF, but he'd picked up a lot of air savvy and hatred for the enemy. He dispensed with the flapping sleeve, and all his jackets and shirts were made with the left sleeve removed, the space filled in with a circular patch centered with an Eighth Air Force insignia. Once you got used to Croft's movements, you forgot he was minus an arm. He made every move so easy. There was no fumbling or any awkward gestures, and he never seemed off balance. Few thought much about Bart Croft's arm until they saw his face.

Colonel Croft was a Hun-hater of the first water. Not since the days of Mickey Mannock had the Allies been pepped by a man who so really and honestly hated the Boche. Colonel Croft gloated in his job of sending men off to Berlin in bombers loaded with eggs.

"There will be no use of the telephone; no mail will go out; and no one leaves the field until this mission

sends in its strike call. That goes for everyone—even me!"

All that was about four years ago, Ames reflected again. Queer, though, that after hopping the Atlantic with this Douglas formation, he should be taking off again from the same field in Britain and heading for Berlin. Queer how he could remember all that. Almost four years to the day. Slitting his eyes, he could still see Croft, who had a face like a bottle-opener, darting from one side of the board to the other, his pointer wielded like a lance, indicating the heavy flak areas, and ejecting snarling snatches of information concerning the target itself.

"I know how you feel about this," he went on. "For years, now, you've heard about missions to Berlin; but the RAF boys have had all the fun and all the grief. They've done a good job, too; but we have a special interest in this," Croft snarled, his steel-gray eyes flashing like the glossy target photographs that were being distributed. "We want this area really clobbered. A precision job, and no excuses. After that, you can worry about getting back."

CLIFF AMES wasn't thinking much about precision bombing or flak areas that murky morning. He was sitting where he could look down the corridor whenever someone came in with more information, more flimsies, more Met. reports. As the door opened, he could get another glimpse of the girl in the Red Cross overalls. That was Grace Manning out there. She wore an old flight jacket buttoned to her dimpled chin. She was busily engaged in something connected with a portable coffee urn. Later on, she'd be out on the line with a jeep; and later still she'd put in a trick with

the clubmobile, providing sustenance and cheer for the mechanics who would be sweating out the mission.

Cliff wondered when Grace got any sleep.

Not that the grind seemed to bother her any, for she always appeared fresh and buoyant, and she somehow managed to keep her bronze curls tidy and herself groomed. There was no war let-down where Grace Manning was concerned; and though there was plenty of mud on the Sevenage field, but you'd never know it by looking at Grace Manning.

But what was more important, Grace was Cliff Ames' girl. That had come about as naturally as shiny steel filings gathering at the end of a magnet, and everyone else accepted it—no questions asked. That's the way it had been from the day Cliff was assigned to the outfit. He had come out of the Squadron Leader's office, where he'd been given his training schedule for the following week; and there was Grace Manning, looking like something clipped from a Red Cross poster—and ten times sweeter.

Grace looked at Cliff, and without even thinking said: "Hello! What's your name? I'm Grace Manning, and I come from Ohio."

It was as simple as all that. Cliff told her his name and his school. He took a mug of java, scotched on a bench, told her she looked like a sweet guy and meant it. Discovered he had no trouble finding words to tell her the rest, either. That's the way it goes sometimes.

From that date on, a mission was marked only by the time it separated Cliff from Grace. The minute the big Forts toolled in, everyone felt it his personal duty to assure Grace there was nothing to worry about; that the *Heavenly Grace*, Cliff's B-17, was somewhere up there in the murk and would be down the minute he could work an opener.

Grace had a smile for them all, and registered the same fearsome throb when she sensed that any ship of the squadron had failed to return. She stood out at the end of the cracked concrete pathway that led into Group Operations, presiding over the coffee and doughnuts, and dispensing cheer, comfort and what news had cropped up during their absence.

Only four years ago, he'd been shot down while carrying eggs for Berlin. Now he had a load of powdered milk—and a quest.

by ARCH
WHITEHOUSE

Berlin



Illustrated by
Arthur Harper



It was something to interpret what they were saying. "Hello, Grace," Cliff always said. He might as well have spouted: "Baby, it's sure swell to be back."

"Hello, Grace," Cliff always said when he came through the circle of leather, parachute harness and mapboards. They always opened up for Cliff, because they all got as big a belt out of it as the Red Cross girl. It was something to watch two people speak with their eyes. It was something to interpret what they were saying. "Hello, Grace," Cliff always said, and took the heavy coffee mug without seeing the hand that extended it. He might just as well have spouted: "Baby, it's sure swell to be back. It was rough over Hamburg today."

Grace Manning played the game too. "The Special Services has a new film for tonight," she'd say. "'Coney Island' with Betty Grable—Technicolor." Then the rest with her eyes that warmed better than the combat liquor ration.

"That's for us, baby!" Cliff would answer. "See you after dinner."

"You get some sleep first," Grace always advised.

Funny. No one ever made any wisecracks.

"So we're going to Berlin," Danny Ward, Cliff's co-pilot, said, when he'd checked the flight sheet. "Berlin!"

"Yeh, just imagine," Cliff said, and then for the benefit of the guys at the British base they had just left, reported he was airborne.

"I used to dream of going to Berlin on a raid," Danny said. "But I

was such a dope, I never finished in time."

"Maybe you were lucky."

"Could be," agreed Danny. "Once I went down with an appendix, and when I was able to navigate, I was two classes behind. Next thing you know, they mix us up switching to B-29s, and we never did finish that routine. I'm lucky to have made this racket."

"Well, you're going to Berlin," Cliff said.

Danny Ward was something of a pixie character. He was small, and moved as if he were animated by charged wires. He was born with a half-smile that blossomed into fullness on the slightest pretext. He had small blue eyes and pale cream-colored eyebrows that seemed ever arched in pleasant surprise. Danny was quite at home aboard a four-engined job; he was as much a part of it all as the auto-pilot, and just as efficient.

"Did you ever do a Berlin show during the war?" Danny inquired simply.

"I started one," Cliff began, and the kaleidoscopic screen of his memory took over again. . . .

He was back in the War Room listening to Bartley Croft and Major Gregg, his squadron leader, go over the details again. Someone snapped a stereoscope slide on the lowered screen to show them what the target

would look like from thirty thousand feet. One of the high-altitude weather boys had taken it the day before, and it was a beaut.

"This is the Brandenburger Tor," Bart Croft explained. "This wide avenue leading from it is the Pariser Platz. If you follow down to this point, you won't go wrong."

"You can't miss it!" they all echoed in chorus.

Croft grinned, and then continued: "This is what we're after. He jabbed his pointer at the screen. "Get that damned supply depot out of there!" he bellowed.

COLONEL COSTIGAN, who was to lead the Big-B raid, stood up, pawed nervously at the peak of his flight cap and tried to say something about tight formations and gunnery defense measures, but the Colonel was no talker. He fluffed a couple of words, grinned sheepishly and closed with: "What the hell! You guys know what I mean. Let's go!"

They liked Costigan for that. He knew exactly what to do, and did it without any unnecessary preliminaries. Costigan presumed everyone knew what he was over there for, and why louse things up any worse than they were? Tell them what to do, when to do it, and if you have a unit and guys trained for the job, why burden them with a lot of repetitious chatter?

But Croft stood up and waved his arm: "You'll have plenty of fighter cover," he said. "The Jugs will take you over as far as here. . . . At this point you should pick up the belly-tank Mustangs, who will cover you until you start your run-in. After that, you'll be on your own until the Spits pick you up again somewhere east of Hamm. Now don't any of you jokers go knocking them off for 109s. They're Spitfires, and there's a hell of a difference!"

Everybody laughed because they were supposed to.

"Send 'em off with a smile," Croft always whispered to Colonel Costigan.

"Yeh," Costigan said. "Figure out something funny for me, will you?"

"Sure!" Croft obliged. "You think you have a bottle of Bourbon in your desk, don't you?"

"There was, when I left last night," Costigan muttered, and tried to remember.

"You'll be surprised when you get back," Croft grinned.

"Yeh?"

"Yeh. I picked up half a case down at Ajax yesterday afternoon."

"I'll be back," Costigan said, and tugged his flight cap down hard.

THEY TORRENTED out of the door, their heavy GI brogans scuffing the track from the War Room deeper and deeper. The O.D., complete with shave, sidearms and a new E.T.O. ribbon, was swept aside as they thumped down the corridor.

"By, Grace!" they all called. "Be seein' you!"

Grace waved, one finger extended, and to the more favored, she winked and blew a kiss. "Good luck, boys," she always called.

Then Cliff came along, his gear wrapped and rolled under his arm. He reached for a cup of coffee and then reconsidered. They could be gone eight hours, and sometimes that's too long. It was easier for the others, but Cliff never liked to leave his seat if he could help it.

"Take care of yourself, sweetheart," she whispered.

"Don't worry. It's a milk-run," Cliff assured her. "We may be late, because we're coming back the long way—avoiding fighter areas."

"It's a milk-run?" the Red Cross girl asked in a whisper.

"A push-over. If I had a jump-seat, I'd take you along, just for the ride," Cliff laughed.

"An all-expense tour of Europe," Cliff's navigator added, and pressed his chart bag to his chest. "And by air, mind you," he concluded, and went off laughing uproariously.

"Stick around, will you?" Cliff said softly to Grace. He said things like that because there was nothing else to say. She had to stick around.

That's what she was there for. There was nowhere else to go. Still, the sentence had a meaning all its own. It meant Cliff hoped she'd be there when they got back—there at the end of the crumpled concrete walk, her coffee urn steaming, her jeep piled with still-warm doughnuts, and copies of the *Stars and Stripes*—one set aside for Cliff, opened at the "Li'l Abner" strip.

"I'll be here. I'll wait for you, sweetheart," Grace whispered.

"I'll be back," Cliff said resolutely.

"We may be late, but I'll be back."

"Don't worry. I'll wait."

"WHAT was it like in those days?" Danny inquired. "I'm sure sorry I missed all that."

"Some of it was rugged. Some of it was just a milk-run," Cliff said, and peered into the weather ahead.

"Hal!" pealed Danny. "There's one for the book! Like us today, eh? We're really on a milk-run this trip."

"Yeh," grinned Cliff, showing his teeth. "In the old days we used to deliver eggs. Boom! Boom!"

"Eggs like in eggs-plosion!" Danny roared. "We should be in the dairy business. Ames & Ward—Eggs and Milk Delivered Daily."

"By air," Cliff added.

"But it must be a lot different."

"It sure is," agreed Cliff.

"Maybe, if we stick on this air-lift job, they'll let us daub this crate up with a suitable name," Danny suggested. "Something like *Holy Cow*—or *The Milky Way*."

"Something like that," Cliff said with no interest.

"What did you call the job you flew in the war?" Danny asked. "You maybe had a name, eh?"

"Yeh. Everybody got gay in those days," Cliff muttered. "I guess we had a name."

"Don't tell me you forget. Give, brother! What was her name?" Danny was hot on the trail now, and wasn't to be put off.

"We called ours *Heavenly Grace*. We all got together on it," Cliff said evasively. "Just one of those things that suited everybody."

"Who was Grace?" Danny persisted. "Some gal in the Red Cross—assigned to our Group. She used to wait for us with coffee and doughnuts. You know how it was."

"I get it," Danny said, after checking the panel. "Some gal everyone liked, eh? Nice name."

"Nice girl, as I remember," Cliff said.

"What happened to her?"

"I don't know. She just disappeared, like everyone else."

Danny looked puzzled. "You mean she wasn't anybody's girl?"

"Look, let's forget the romance. Let's do some flying. You take over,"

snapped Cliff. "I'm going back to check the load."

"Sure! Sure, Cliff. Thanks."

Danny Ward would sooner fly than eat. What did it matter whose girl she was? Let Cliff go check the load. Danny would rather fly than— Still, he did wonder about the Grace gal, once he had everything trimmed again.

Cliff went aft and checked the holding-down fittings that held the load in position. He ran his hands over the boxes and read the labels on the cartons, and remembered the day he'd started for Berlin before. The load was different then. Special stuff with delayed-action fuses that weren't supposed to detonate until the stuff was well augered in.

This load was different. And how!

Alone in the dim cargo hull, with the smells of new cardboard, wet rope, the metallic tang of blue-steel straps and the pungency of planed wood, Cliff had time to think it over further. Four years before, that had been. Eggs instead of milk. They had all the eggs and milk they wanted in the combat mess before the briefing. Flak helmets, flak vests and a lot of talk about rocket-firing jobs. The Big-B coming up at last.

What a morning that was, once they got the green light from the tower. Someone said there were two generals up there watching the get-away and checking the assembly. They sure saw something. It was a beaut, that take-off. A Fort with a big "K" on her tail exploded smack over the village and fell on a little school with a red-tiled roof. Two more slid into each other as they churned up through the first layer of mist. God only knew how that happened. Cliff Ames found himself in the sub-leader's position long before they cleared the coast.

You get promoted in mid-air at this racket. What was that old war-time ditty?

Curse 'em all, curse 'em all!

The long, the short and the tall.

There'll be no promotion,

This side of the ocean,

So cheer up my lads and curse 'em all.

Then they were over and taking the flak outside Rotterdam, and a Fort left the formation with her No. 4 engine blazing and another hanging over the leading edge of the wing—just hanging there on wire and cable.

Half a dozen silken carnations blossomed out one by one, and then the whole hulk exploded.

Cliff remembered all that, because half an hour later—too far in to figure even a ditching—he too bumped into trouble, and the first thing he figured was that if he hadn't taken over the sub-leader's spot in the combat box, it never would have happened.

The starboard wing-tip went first. "Bomb doors open," he ordered, and began punching the alarm bell—as if that was necessary!



But there he was on the fringe of the element, and an FW came hurtling out of a bundle of cotton and let them have it with rocket-fire before his gunners could even call the attack position. Where the hell were those Jugs who were supposed to be escorting them?

The starboard wing-tip went first, and fluttered away like an enlarged escape hatch. "Bomb doors open," he ordered, and began punching the alarm bell—as if that was necessary!

"Get them out of here!" he yelled at his bombardier. "Jettison everything! Abandon ship!"

Cliff Ames went through it all again as he had done a thousand times before. Beads of perspiration sparkled at his temples, and his palms gave off a familiar warm odor. His fingers clutched at the battened end of a crate, and it all appeared on the wall of the cargo hull as clear as if it had been painted there by an artist with a photographic eye.

"Get 'em out of here," he muttered again between clenched teeth. "Get 'em out!"

His co-pilot, green-gilled, fumbling, had nodded and crawled out of the office window and stood on the

wing-root for some seconds. "Get going!" Cliff yelled while his seat-mate tried to check his chest pack before stepping off. The co-pilot waved and disappeared. There was a leaden thud somewhere aft, and the wheel jerked and snarled in Cliff's hands.

Ames closed his eyes at the memory of that. He'd winced a thousand times at the realization that a man had hit the tail assembly. A guy can be hacked in two with a smack like that.

That was when Cliff Ames decided to ride her down. He wasn't taking any tail assembly in the gut. A guy could never get back that way.

Then came a series of breathless jerks as the bombardier or someone aft struggled to get the bombs away manually. Maybe he was getting the bomb doors open—or something. The navigator slapped him on the shoulder, not too violently; but the signal made Cliff recoil and slam against his safety straps.

"All clear—everything!" the navigator bellowed. "Bombs and everything. Give me ten seconds."

"Get going! Get going!" roared Cliff over the high-pitched scream of air slamming through the fractured structure.

"You coming?" the navigator called. "Get going! I'm riding her down. Get—"

"You're nuts!" the voice behind yelled, and the navigator plunged away for the escape hatch.

SUDDENLY it was quiet—quiet, for the shattered interior of a doomed Fortress. Cliff snapped the switches and cut the props to full feather, and let her slide down in her own sweet way. He could see a few white carnations swinging in the wind below. There were still a few slabs of burnished metal slithering through the sky like berserk Furies seeking the gathering of the gremlins. He swung around with an effort that creaked ominously through the craft, and headed for a long oblong of gray-green that edged a heavy wood. The B-17 slobbered through the sky, shedding strips and parts, fighting the uneven pressures that walled up against the wounds in her sides and the gaps in her leading edges. Cliff wondered about the bomb doors, and whether the wheels had stayed up. There was still some smoke curling through the compartment; and somewhere aft, an unmanned .50-caliber gun had swung loose like a figure on a gibbet.

All this time, through all the anxious minutes that crept by like pain-packed hours, Cliff patted the bulge that was his escape kit and checked everything. He knew exactly what he would do—where he would head, and who he would contact. They'd had plenty of lectures on what to do in case of a forced landing in enemy territory. Cliff knew what *he* would do, anyhow. It might take weeks, perhaps months; but he knew Grace Manning would wait for him. That's all it meant to Cliff. Getting down and putting the rules of the escape routine into practice.

He knew he wore GI brogans under his flight boots. He felt inside his coverall for his old woolen cap. In his escape kit there'd be faked credentials, a photograph of himself in ragged civilian clothing. There was an area map printed on silk, a tube of special yellow tablets, and papers he could palm off on either the Jerries or the stinkers who worked with them. In another pocket was an oil-silk packet containing forty dollars in Belgian and Dutch currency. A guy should be able to get a long way on forty bucks.

CLIFF AMES had it all figured out long before the Big-B show. He had a paratrooper's fighting knife stuck in the top of his sock, Scot dirk style. He would ditch his pack of Luckies to be on the safe side. No sense risking the plan just for a cigarette. He'd be able to get plenty from Grace when he got back. She'd be there, waiting around somewhere. He could always rely on Grace for an extra pack.

He was amazed at how well the battered Fort behaved on the way down. She was slow on the rudder and sluggish on the one aileron he had left, but she responded. It was just a matter of careful timing. Just figure the time lag, and you couldn't miss. He'd get down and smoke her, and get away like that. The others would be snapped up like drifting bugs.

Not Cliff Ames.

He brought her around in a final effort, and set her ragged snout at the long green carpet ahead. She whistled louder now as she approached the ground, and Cliff caught himself scowling at this final *beep-beep-beep* of betrayal. "Quiet! . . . Quiet!" he appealed. The *beep-beep-beep* skirled into a continuous high-pitched wail now. It screeched through the rocket-slashed hulk, and went roaring out past the big holes in the dural walls. "Fine! Fine!" Cliff complained. "Fine thing, all this racket—just when I'm making it."

There was a low grind somewhere below, and it scaled up to a wrench of tortured metal. That could be the bomb doors, Cliff figured, and tried to stretch the floundering glide.

Something else hit and caught, and the Fort spun like a polo pony trying to get on the ball instead of heading for a defense position. Cliff fought her with pedal and wheel, and sat it out for the last gasping fifty yards.

Then she hit, and Cliff smacked into the panel and swore. She scraped along on what was left underneath, and tossed two engines ahead. They bumped down the field like uneven bowling balls, and kicked up great patches of emerald turf. A prop blade went spinning end over end toward the sky.

Cliff looked out one side, and was startled to see there was no wing of any sort any more. Jagged panels were flapping end-over-end somewhere behind as if trying to catch up with the rest of the hulk. Further back was a billowing cloud of dusty smoke. Another loose engine cartwheeled along to catch the others.

Cliff Ames was down—in Germany.

He sat there, breathless and trembling. He tested his arms and legs and discovered he could unlatch his straps. A curl of blue smoke came up from somewhere below his feet and Cliff knew it was time to hit for the brush. He slipped back between the seats and found a gap where a wing root had been, and waited until he could flip a match into a greasy puddle forming on the floor of the radio compartment.

What was left of *Heavenly Grace* went up with one loud slap of flame that punched a shapeless mushroom of smoke through the aperture after him. A final glance around, and he darted across the open space, taking cover in the billow of smoke and headed for the brush fringing the wood.

"Wait for me, Grace!" he muttered.

TREMBLING with the memory of that, Cliff glanced around the hull again. The flight four years before seemed more real than this show today. All around him were crates of dried milk, destined for a hungry city blockaded by an unfriendly power. A city that was a war scar festering for the want of care and nourishment. A smudge on a great map that might at any minute smolder and suddenly burst into another world conflagration. Once it was eggs. Now it was milk.

Wouldn't Bart Croft foam at the mouth if he could see this?

Cliff Ames exhaled, pushed himself to his feet and peered out an oblong port. Below was the same wide *Autobahn* and the pattern of an agricultural area. It hadn't changed much. He went up the gangway, looked in on his navigator and got a Roger signal. On course—on time. He gave the guy a smile, and swung back into the pilots' compartment.

He dropped into the right-hand seat and said: "Stay there. You can use the experience." Danny grinned his appreciation. "So far, no Yaks playing games in the air corridor," he yelled across the cockpit.

"You watch out for kite balloons!" Cliff responded. "There was a report—"

"I'd like to see any Red Yak try to push me off course."

"Don't bet against it."

"That's right," Danny reflected. "They smacked into a British airliner, didn't they? They can play rough, those Yak guys."

"It can be rough," agreed Cliff, and peering out, he studied the layout below. There were several woods and several oblong gray-green patches where a guy could put a job down if he had to. He even reached the point where he was looking for a blackened patch a torched Fort could have left on the grass. There were a dozen such splotches—four years later! Any one of them could have marked where he went down.

"You say you started on a Berlin show?" Danny broke in suddenly. "What do you mean started? Did you abort, or something?"

"We got clobbered."

Danny looked puzzled. "Got clobbered?"

"We took two rockets from a 190-job. It was rough."

"Shot down?" gasped Danny.

"All the way," grinned Cliff. "My crew jumped, but I stayed with her. It wasn't too bad—up to then."

Danny pursed his lips to whistle. He never finished. He just said: "I think that's what I'd do if I had anything to work with."

"I figured I had enough."

"Then what?"

"They nailed me before I hit the underground."

Danny frowned in righteous puzzlement. Ames didn't try to explain. It was all there in *his* mind, and it must have happened somewhere below. It was easy to picture it from up there. The details would be clear for a long time.

Cliff Ames never got a chance to hit a ditch or contact the underground. He walked right into the arms of three members of the Hun Forestry Corps who were figuring on a leave. There was furlough and a bonus for capture of Allied airmen.

They nailed Cliff before he had any chance to reach for his knife or get rid of his escape kit. *Whammo!* They hit him as he stuck his head through a hedge. It was like smacking a duck with its head caught in a wire mesh. Cliff never knew what hit him.

From then on, it was nothing like what they had said in the little blue book: War Department Pamphlet

21-7. "If You Are Captured— These Are Your Rights."

"You are a prisoner of war, not a criminal.

You must be humanely treated at all times.

Stand up for your rights, but do it with military courtesy and firmness.

The enemy will respect you.

The enemy must clothe and feed you, and if you are wounded you are entitled to the same medical care as a member of the enemy's Army."

What a laugh!

"As a prisoner of war you are in a tough spot, but—the Army hasn't forgotten you.

You may write three letters a month.

The Red Cross and the Protecting Powers will do all they can for you.

Your own pride as a soldier will see you through."

They rushed Cliff before several sets of interrogating officers without bothering to attend to the wound that crusted the hair of his head. He was questioned and pushed around when he refused to give more than his name, rank and serial number. He was taunted with what they already knew about the mission. They clapped him into close confinement for a week, and gave him another going over. After that, they walked him down a road and led him into a small churchyard and asked whether he preferred to take it with or without a handkerchief.

Cliff said he'd take a cigarette, and the Unter-Offizier in charge offered him a Camel. There was one for the book! They set the stage so well, Cliff's knees were ready to go out before the firing party was lined up on the other side.

You are a prisoner of war, not a criminal.

When he had finished the butt, the little German officer came up again and with an oily smile said: "Dot's all. Chust a leedle choke, my friend. We had no intention of shooting you. Chust a leedle choke. Sometimes it works, and they say somedings we want to know."

"Some joke," muttered Cliff as they led him down the road, and two of the firing party stayed with him until they put him on the train. Two more, uglier than the others, took over from there.

He sat haggard and trembling, longing for a drink. They kept him in that rattler for twelve hours. The sentries took turns leaning out the window whenever the train came to a halt, and gathered in supplies from service carts that crunched up and down the platforms.

Cliff watched the two sentries gnaw on black bread sandwiches and swill down mugs of acorn coffee. He fig-



Cliff Ames was down—in Germany. He sat there, breathless and trembling.

ured the Red Cross would get through sometime. He knew all about what the International Red Cross was supposed to do. There'd be a "capture case" awaiting him at the Oflag. It would be a fair-sized fiber suitcase with pajamas, underwear, a small medical kit, tobacco, cigarettes, a sweater and a couple of pairs of socks. He knew all about that, because Grace Manning had told him. They were shipped in ahead, and were in the prison stores all set for each prisoner as he was brought in.

But there was no "capture case" for Cliff Ames when he arrived. The prison officials didn't produce one for more than a month. When they turned it over to him, it had been thoroughly rifled. There was a flimsy sweater, a harmonica, a pair of socks and a decayed package of shortbread crackers in it. The Jerry sergeant in charge said that's all there was, and bundled him back to his quarters.

There was no means of getting information out. Everyone wrote letters, and for weeks they were never collected. The German officials said a lot of prison mail had been burned when an Allied bomb hit a railroad station. That was always used to explain a lot of things. Bombs, it seemed, were always hitting railroad stations or the depots where the International Red Cross had stored the "capture cases." You can't argue from behind barbed wire.

You just hope the potato stew will be more palatable that night.

Cliff remembered it all: The bitterness, the broiling hatred, the weary waiting and the canker of doubt that

gnawed at them until liberation came. The hours of pacing a limited space. The flare-up quarrels that broke out on little or no pretext. The period of resignation when he tried to make the best of it and do some serious reading. Then the burning passion to work and escape. The plans he drew and the gadgets he devised to dig a tunnel and provide it with air while the "escape party" worked on its belly underground.

All that, and the consuming hunger and the needling tension that came when he tried to think of Grace. The frantic wait while the mail was distributed, the packages opened. . . .

Never anything for Cliff Ames.

HE buttonholed the Swiss Red Cross official and begged him to get a message out. The Swiss nodded and took the details, but he never came back and Cliff never knew. Next time it was a different Swiss, and Cliff's name was not on his list either. No one was inquiring about him at all. Cliff couldn't know he'd been reported M.I.A. and later declared dead. They figured no one could have crawled out of that hulk after it burned. Someone had seen it all happen. Someone had counted parachutes, and knew how many guys were rounded up in the drop area, but they never knew Cliff had ridden her down and had been nailed in another village. How could they know?

How could Cliff know?

How could Grace Manning know?

That's how it was right up to liberation, and by then no one seemed to know anything at all. They were



"Lock up and stand by. I got business down there."

rounded up, flown out and given the demobilization preference, and it all happened so fast no one had time to check anything with anyone. No one worried about Cliff Ames, except to bundle him home, pay him off and shunt him back into civilian life. . . .

Danny Ward broke it up with: "They're really glomming up the Tempelhof band—just like they said." Cliff punched in his phone jack, glanced up at the dial and heard the familiar *beep-beep-beep* of the jamming signal. He screwed up his face and said: "Let's try the alternate frequency."

They switched over just in time to hear: ". . . twelve cargo ships are stacked above Tempelhof awaiting instructions. Incoming planes can beam on AFN" (The American broadcasting station in Berlin) "as long as the band is clear. . . . Over."

"I'm letting down before we get in that close," Cliff decided. "We'll go in on contact. I'm not sitting up in that stuff."

"I'll bet those guys have no idea where any of us are," Danny grinned. "I'll bet we could fly this crate anywhere in Europe and black-market the cargo, and have enough left to go buy a country of our own."

"Don't think I haven't felt like doing that, too," Cliff started to say, but he choked it back and switched seats with Danny so he'd be on the left side when he got to Tempelhof—where he belonged.

But that's the way he'd felt back home after peace broke out all over the map. There had been the weeks of trying to get into the Pacific mess, but he was ruled out, as his records were all fouled up. He spent his last case note trying to find Grace, but

none of the leads had anything at the end. Then he pounded the sidewalks until his pride began to fritter out.

He searched faces as he hitch-hiked from town to town seeking someone to talk to—someone who spoke his language, someone who knew someone. But he was always hungry, and hitch-hiking didn't provide combat mess grub.

The hunger, the lonesomeness and the frustration piled up, and the heat of bitterness welded it all into a blanket of blind hatred—hatred for the system, for the castes, for the era, for the society that had spawned him. There was a fleeting instant when he wondered whether his Army .45 could have any value outside a pawnshop. He considered it and figured what he could get, the risk and how long he could eat on what he got. Even if he muffed it, what had he to lose? They feed a guy well in stir, they say. Especially that last meal.

But that was the day the sun came out and he felt his belly warm and he wanted to walk; and when he walked, he found himself in a new town staring at a new Air Force poster. He'd never seen one of those before. Where had he been all these months?

They took him back—just in time. The Air Force sure could use him, no matter how fouled up his records were. If he could fly two- or four-engined jobs, he could have his old rank back. Just get in there and fly! It wasn't the old combat mess chow, but it filled a lot of empty space and Cliff Ames was almost happy again. He liked to fly; he liked being clean and having a bed to sleep in. He liked being responsible for something, whether it was a C-54 or a load of pick-handles destined for Alaska.

He got around and met people again. Once in a while he scared hell out of a guy who figured he'd been dead for three or four years. Cliff got a belt out of that; and when the horseplay died down, he always asked the same question.

"You know what became of Grace Manning?"

The answers were always different. Some didn't remember. Some said she went back to the States after Cliff "went down." Some said she went to Europe right after the invasion. Some said she switched over to another Group. Most of them smirked and said they'd bet she married the next good-looking guy who came along.

He got that line in California, Alaska, Washington and the Astor bar in New York. He got it so often he soon had it all figured out. Not that he could blame Grace if she got a chance; but it seemed tough, that's all. She had said over and over that she'd wait. He had told her that morning, he'd be back. Well, he was delayed as he had suggested, but he had kept *his* word and he had come back; but where was Grace? She could have left some word, some message. She could have contacted someone. There were a dozen ways, even though Cliff could never think of one; but there had to be. She just didn't wait, that's all.

By the time the C-54 air-lift racket was lined up, Cliff Ames was burning with the realization he couldn't trust anyone. He wasn't going to be tricked like that again. He'd take his women as he found them, and leave them where they dropped.

"They're never going to lead me around again," he said to himself.

That's the way it was, right up to the day they took off for Berlin, loaded with milk and eggs—not just eggs.

Rain was flailing against the wind-screen, and the weather was turning bad. Now and then a jagged splinter of lightning lit up the sky and gilded the clouds with hot saffron and gold. Danny kept trying to figure a way to get through the Red jamming, but only managed to bat his ears silly.

Cliff went down lower and risked it. The weather changed to hot and humid, and someone was stacking thunderheads in uneven piles. The updraft pounded from below, and Cliff was sawing away with the wheel to keep an even keel. Still, that was better than being on the downdraft side of the disturbance.

"We ain't going to feel so good if this keeps up," Danny said, studying the layout below for a time, while Cliff eased back on the throttles and let her doll-dance through the turbulence. Danny turned sharply. "I got a wide highway—what do they call it,

an *Autobahn*?—and a railroad. That mean anything to you?"

"They'll take us right in," the pilot said. "All we got to do is to find Tempelhof."

"And have some luck if there's any balloons up."

Another forked tongue of flame spat from the sky like a berserk neon sign. In the fractional period of glare they imagined fleets of aircraft, formations of fighters carrying out routine maneuvers, and coveys of captive balloons and a dozen other hazards to air navigation. But none of it materialized by the time they were picking their way through the murk and scanning the outline of Tempelhof.

"Well," grinned Danny, "this time you're going to make it."

"Looks like it," agreed Cliff, feeling everything knot up within him.

"You just needed the right co-pilot," Danny said proudly.

"I needed something," Cliff agreed, and produced a wan smile. He tried calling the Tempelhof tower, but all he got was someone splitting knots with a buzz-saw. They had no choice now. It was neck or nothing, and to hell with the balloon cables.

THEY circled the field once and checked the layout with the field details Danny had clipped to his chart. It sure was a whopping field, and it looked as if they had plenty of room to get down if the traffic held off.

"Watch the tower for a lamp signal."

"They're shooting a jeep down to the end of the runway," Danny said. "They figure we're coming in, I guess. Yep—there's a green light. We made it, Buster!"

Cliff called for the proper amount of flap and punched at the landing-gear button. The mechanism grumbled, grated and wheezed until the red light came on, and indicated the wheels were down and locked. They cross-checked everything, and Cliff let her slide in. They hit right, and she held it after the first awesome pressure against the oleo cylinders, and gradually smoothed out so Cliff could cut out the outboard engines and taxi to the end of the runway on two.

"It's quieter than it would have been four years ago," Danny said, and began jotting down final flight figures. "I got to see this town."

"You'd better stick around, brother," Cliff warned. "We maybe have to go back on a fast turnaround to Frankfurt."

"Okay, I'll take Frankfurt," said Danny cheerfully. "Here's our jeep."

Cliff wheeled the big cargo ship into the perimeter track, and a bright yellow and black Air Force vehicle came up out of the gloom, wheeled

expertly into the glare of their landing lights and showed a large tail sign which read: "FOLLOW ME!"

"Lead on, sister!" Danny yelled out of his open cockpit window. "Right away we get a woman," he added with a meaningful thumb-jerk toward the little jeep. "We're going to like this town."

Cliff said: "Was that a woman?"

"She had coveralls and a woolen cap, but I saw curls. Not a bad-looker either. Air Force WAC, I guess."

The girl driver led the C-54 down the perimeter track to a broad expanse of concrete where a long line of Army trucks were drawn up. Floodlights threw great splotches of glare on their turned-back tarpaulins and set up gloomy shadows. It took some maneuvering to get the big cargo job where the girl in the jeep wanted it, but she handled her vehicle expertly.

Cliff was fascinated as he watched the girl tool her jeep in and out to clear a path for him until at last she had him in an open space, and with a professional air stood on her seat and gave him the signal to cut his engines.

"They run everything," grumbled Danny. "I mean to say—"

The girl below backed the jeep away and parked it under a floodlight that hung from a storehouse wall. Cliff took another look, palmed the throttles back, flicked the switches and said to Danny: "Lock up and stand by. I got business down there."

"Boy, you work fast, don't you?" Danny muttered. "What's the hurry? There must be a whole company of them."

"Not like this one," Cliff said, and hurried down the companionway and opened the hull door. He dropped to the concrete before anyone had time to run in a platform, and hurried across toward the jeep.

The girl was lighting a cigarette when he grabbed her shoulders.

"Grace!" he whispered breathlessly. "Grace, it's Cliff."

The girl held the flame of her lighter and stared into his face. "Grace," he said again, and watched fear blanch her features. She trembled in his grasp, and the cigarette fell from her parted lips. He caught her as her knees gave. He brushed her brow with kisses.

"Come on, baby, come on!" Cliff pleaded. "It's just me—Cliff."

She stiffened and shook out of it, stared at him, past him at the cargo carrier and back again into his eyes. That gave him time to realize she had grown more lovely with the years. There was a new warm fullness to her body; her eyes were steady, brave and mature. There was a loveliness about her mouth and throat, a love-

liness combined with a gracious poise even in the face of this shock that captivated him. Grace Manning had grown up.

"Cliff," she said finally, her voice was low and packed with a new allure. Her fingertips caressed his temples and his cheeks. "Cliff, you came back."

"Sure! I told you I'd come back."

"They said you—you didn't make it. You rode her down, and she went up on you."

"I made it, darling. I made it," Cliff was saying.

"Oh, Cliff! I waited and waited. I waited until all hope had gone, and then I went home. I joined the Air Force for you, and came on here. I knew you'd get to Berlin if you were still around. That was my only hope. I tried and searched, but there was nothing anywhere else."

"I checked with the Red Cross after liberation. They just said you had signed out. They just weren't interested."

"I went out to the Pacific at first . . . Anything to get a new perspective. I hoped you'd come out there, if—"

"I tried that, sweetheart, but no soap."

"Oh, Cliff," she breathed again. "It's wonderful! And you're all right, darling? You came out all right?"

"Better than ever. Look at me! Everything I started with, and I'm back flying. I finally got to Berlin. I told you I'd make it. . . . If it was a milk-run!" he roared.

HE kissed her again, and they stood staring at each other under the harsh glare of the working light, making up for the years and knotting up the loose ends.

"There'll be no more waiting, baby," Cliff said. "We can get married over here, I suppose."

Grace laughed for the first time. "I'll have to get permission from my boss, and he's tough."

"How tough?"

"Remember Colonel Croft?"

"Bart Croft—the Hun-hater?" said Cliff Ames. "Where does he come in?"

"Bart Croft's in charge of the distribution of food from the air-lift," Grace said, her eyes sparkling. "Can you beat that?"

"Oh, brother! The war *must* be over," gasped Cliff. "Just imagine Bart Croft *feeding* the Germans! There's one for the book."

"But you got to Berlin, darling," Grace beamed.

"Yeh, what price the air age? It took me just four years to make it."

"But you made it, darling. You made it."

"Where can a guy get something to eat around here?" Cliff asked. "I'm famished."

OUR FRIEND OFFICER MURPHY
OF THE OLD NEIGHBORHOOD
DRIVES DOWN TO FLORIDA—AND
FINDS THAT EVEN THERE THE
MYSTERY OF A MURDER MAKES
ITS GRIM DEMANDS UPON HIM.

Vacations

by JOEL
REEVE



*Illustrated by
Raymond
Thayer*

MAYBE, Officer Murphy considered, he could even forget for awhile that he was a cop. Certainly nothing could be farther from the Old Neighborhood than himself in a convertible Buick, driving over concourses spanning blue waters, heading for the narrow strip of sand off West Coast Florida known as Lifeboat Key. It was November, but in Florida it was hot and clear, a strange enough thing to a man who had never before been south of Philadelphia.

It was Alderman Harrigan's car. In Murphy's pocket was expense money provided by Harrigan. He had leave from the Department. It was an amazing thing and as yet he was not used to it. He kept staring at the waving coconut palms, at the lush undergrowth by the side of the road, at the cities of white clouds tossed in a cerulean sky, and wondering if this was a part of the United States, or if he had driven into an improbable land where cops had no place.

He drove slowly over a little hump-backed bridge leading directly to the straight road which bisected Lifeboat Key, and people were fishing right off the bridge, their hooks dangling into water of a beautiful greenish hue. It

was then he first saw the "purple" woman.

A stout little man in loose shorts, high-topped sneakers and a deep sunburn was adjusting her rod. She was younger than the man, and shapely, scantily dressed in a bra and-pleated shorts of bold-figured material. She had red hair drawn back sleekly; her eyebrows were V-shaped above dark glasses. Her features were piquant without beauty.

Her skin had turned a sort of mauve under the southern sun. He could not help staring at her. She stared right back, her hidden eyes running over the expensive car, the lean driver with rolled-up sleeves and the new tan of a tourist. She smiled, a thin but inviting smile, the kind he had seen on the mouth of many a girl back home in the Old Neighborhood.

He went on, but the words of Alderman Harrigan, who had sent him here, came back to him. "You know my brother's boy Charley—Happy Charley Harrigan, they call him. What a name! He's gone crazy after some red-headed woman down in Florida. Furthermore, she is married to a wholesale grocer, name of Moscorp. Happy Charley! But he has the makings of a good boy; and my brother,

God rest him, is gone—and in short, I want you to go down there. You need a vacation—you've been nursin' the Old Neighborhood for years. Go down to this Lifeboat Key, wherever in hell it is, use your head, bring the boy back. I'm takin' care of everything for you, Murphy. I trust you."

So here was Lifeboat Key; and here, amazing as it might seem, was Murphy, a child of the city, driving this automobile he could never afford for himself, and there was this woman, who had red hair and a fat husband. Lifeboat Key was off the beaten path, he had learned, one of those islands halfway between Tampa and Fort Myers which are all sand and Gulf on one side, and all jungle and Bay on the other, with a road in the middle. Somehow or other Lifeboat had never built up with roadside jooks, overnight cabins, gas stations, but had retained its pristine beauty, with the aid of property-owners few and far between along its single straight narrow road. There was one large cluster of bungalows run by a couple named Jackson, who were expecting Murphy.

THEY had a cabin ready, a spacious place with two bedrooms and a fine large living-room and a bath of some proportions. Mrs. Jackson proved to be a friendly, easy-talking woman, and Murphy felt right at home.

"You can eat right here. Jackson cooks good. I see you're from New York. We had a little trouble with one of our people from New York

Are Not for Cops

yesterday. Hope the Sheriff gets him straightened out. Nice boy, too."

Jackson said: "Now, Nelly! Mr. Murphy isn't interested—"

"Well, if that Charley Harrigan comes home drunk again—"

Murphy put in quietly: "I know Charley."

"Oh?" Mrs. Jackson's eyes went to the Buick. "He's got a car just like yours—even the license number. Or nearly—"

Murphy said: "Yeah. Could I have a hamburger now?"

He went into the dining-room. There was a small bar, he saw. A window was broken, and a chair, looked scarred. A small man in khaki pants and sneakers, unshaven, fox-faced, sat in a corner, reading a paper. His name was Willy Aswell, it seemed, and he was a fishing guide, if Murphy wanted to fish.

Mr. Jackson repaired to the kitchen, and his wife lowered her voice. "If you're a friend of Charley's—Sheriff Langley happened to be out here, and took Charley in. The place was almost wrecked. He didn't say a thing—Charley, I mean. Just threw a chair through that window."

"Playful," said Murphy. "A playful boy."

"Drunk," said Mrs. Jackson. "And no wonder, him and that Mrs. Moskorp—"

Willy Aswell said: "You shouldn't oughta talk like that, Nelly."

"For his own good," said Mrs. Jackson firmly. "I like the boy, and I told Langley I wouldn't make a complaint. If Mr. Murphy is a friend—"

Aswell interrupted: "Everybody likes Charley. He's quick with a buck; he's pally with everybody. That Moskorp babe—"

Murphy said: "You don't talk like a Southerner, Aswell."

"I ain't," said the fisherman. His tight mouth closed, and he went behind the newspaper.

"Like a—a cat. Botherin' the boy. Botherin' everybody. That fat little husband, poor thing, could never keep up with her."

There was more. It was bad to be a cop, sometimes, Murphy thought. His mind couldn't help working the way it did: Putting people into categories.

Aswell, now, was an ex-con. Talked out of the side of his tight mouth, us-

ing con talk. Mrs. Jackson, kindly, friendly, would be a help. The woman was a trouble-maker from the word go. The fat little grocer was type-cast for the deceived, helpless husband. Charley was a young wastrel heading for grave results of his folly.

Maybe a cop could not take a vacation, he thought. . . . The hamburger came, and it was delicious. He had been hungry, he realized. He had driven from Jacksonville that morning, and the sun and wind had made him a bit sleepy. . . . Outside, the twin to his Buick slammed into the drive, and brakes screeched.

MURPHY sighed. No rest for the weary cop! He finished the sandwich, got up and went quickly outdoors. Charley was as lanky and blond as ever, with light blue eyes and a quick grin. He was scowling now, though, at the other Buick convertible. He was helping a pretty dark-haired girl to the ground, and staring about in some fear.

Murphy said: "It's only me, Charley."

The youth swung around, checked a harsh word and laughed helplessly. He said: "So he sent you! He's smart, that Unk. . . . This is Mary Lou Langley, Murphy. Her pappy is the Sheriff, and last night I pitched one, and had to go to town and pay a fine. Mary Lou felt sorry for me, and thought maybe she could reform me a little. She did." His resentment was gone; his sly, merry eyes twinkled at Murphy. "I see you got Unk's other convertible. That leaves him only the sedan and the coupé. Poor old Unk!"

Murphy said: "Pleased to meetcha, Miss Langley. . . . I'll see you later, Charley. Got to unpack now. It's real nice here, huh?"

"It's swell," said Charley. He kept looking at the girl in a way Murphy recognized, half-stunned but thoroughly admiring. She was a little beauty, all right, with dimples and a good, clean face. They were like any two kids in the Old Neighborhood, just discovering one another. Usually it came out fine, a thing like this.

But there was that woman, the feline creature who had caused Charley enough upset to have him get drunk and throw things. . . .

It was a good time to evade Charley, Murphy decided. He drove back

along the concrete road to town, and went to dinner at a Spanish restaurant. He felt a little self-conscious in the clothing he had bought in Jax—short-sleeved thin shirt, slacks and saddle shoes—until he saw that everyone else was attired the same way. He wandered into an early movie—a cop movie. He loved that kind, because they worked out so neatly, all the problems solved, no loose ends, as in real life. When he came out, he looked up the number of Sheriff Langley, called it, represented himself as a lonely cop, and got an invitation to come out and talk about crime and punishment.

Langley was a lantern-jawed man with eyes like his daughter's, and the house was full of photographs of Mary Lou. Mrs. Langley was dead, and the Sheriff set a great store by his only child, he said over and over. He talked more about Mary Lou than about crime in Florida—there were no gangs, no organized mischief, just a few stabbings, second-story jobs—and Murphy began to feel uneasy about Charley Harrigan again.

At eleven o'clock Langley began scowling and staring at his watch. At five after the hour Mary Lou came in.

Langley said: "This is my daughter, Mary Lou."

The girl's eyes flickered; then she said in a low voice: "How do you do?"

Langley said: "That good-for-nothin' jest barely did get you home on time."

The girl said: "Yes. . . . He's all right, Father. Excuse me, won't you, please, sir?" She bowed slightly at Murphy. She was too stiff and tense. "Just a little headache." She left.

LANGLEY said: "If that Yankee—'Scuse me, Murphy, but she went out for a ride with a wild young rascal. Nice sorta boy, but wild. . . . And if he done anything to make her unhappy, I'll shoot him fuller o' holes than Swiss cheese."

Murphy said: "Wouldn't blame you. Lovely girl. Well, Sheriff—" And he made a hasty departure.

When he came to the humpbacked bridge leading to Lifeboat Key, he instinctively slowed down, remembering the fishermen. The full moon shone, and the bridge was deserted. He had the top down, and the moon shone like daylight, or he would never have seen it.



She did not look purple in the moonlight. She just looked dead.

The tide was running strongly to the Gulf. He saw the object in the water, and if it was a fish it was a huge one, and moving too slow. He stopped the car, got out and ran down on the bank of the pass.

The moon left no doubt, then. Murphy, knowing nothing of the bottom here, went gingerly into the water, stopping only to take off the new shoes. Soft sand clutched at his feet, and then he swam.

He fought back, towing his burden. He clambered ashore and put the body down on the dry sand. He mechanically wiped off his face and wrung water from his new clothing. The woman did not look purple in the moonlight. She just looked dead.

He made the tests, but it was no use. He had seen death too often to mistake the signs. The bra had slipped, and he adjusted it, for he was a modest man. The figured tights shone like fish scales, and Murphy shivered. Mrs. Moskorp's red hair was loose, and her face was swollen, and she did not look attractive in death. Murphy spread his coat over her.

Mrs. Jackson had said, he remembered, that the Moskorps had the white cottage on the Bay side of the Key, where they could dock a hired boat. He wondered if there would be a telephone. He certainly wanted to get Mr. Moskorp at once—and the Sheriff. Then he had to see Charley.

If there was a good doctor, he could determine the time of death—pretty

near, anyway, he amended. It would not be easy—nothing would be easy. There were so few people in a place like this who could have—

But maybe she was not murdered, he thought, picking up his shoes and making his way to the Buick. Maybe she had fallen into the Bay and drowned, and the tide had carried her down here for Murphy to find.

He shook his head wearily. He had been a cop too long. He could smell murder. This woman—he wished he knew more about her.

Then he realized he knew enough about her. What he needed to know was plenty about the others on Lifeboat Key—and about the movements of Charley Harrigan. His watch had stopped, and the dashboard clock did not work very well. He put on the shoes and drove up the road, looking for a light. It was only four hundred feet from the road to the Bay at this point, and he saw the cottage by the moonlight.

THE house was built of concrete block and painted white. He drove in and cut off the motor and slid off the wet leather seat and waited a moment. There was a light in the house. He listened, but heard nothing.

He walked across the crunchy sand and knocked on the door. After a moment he tried the knob, and it gave, and he went in. There was a lamp going in a long room which ran narrowly through the house, forming a

living- and dining-room, with doors leading off on both sides. Gingerly, he explored.

There were two bedrooms; one containing men's things, another showing unmistakable signs of womankind. They were empty. Murphy came back to the living-room, thinking about this, about the fat little grocer who could not even share a room with his young wife. There was a telephone on a table, and he called Langley.

The car drove up while he was talking to the Sheriff. The clock on the mantel said twelve—allow fifteen minutes—no, ten, Murphy's cop's mind adjusted; seconds seem long under stress. That meant he had discovered the body about ten before midnight. . . . Langley promised to come right out to the bridge and meet him there.

Outside the door a voice said tremulously: "Charley? That you talkin' in there?"

MURPHY sighed. Mr. Moskorp did not have nerve enough to come into his own house, lest his wife have a male visitor. He got up and went to the door and said: "I'm sorry, Mr. Moskorp. I have bad news for you. I'm an officer of the law—Murphy's the name. Your wife—" It was the old routine, like back in the Old Neighborhood, breaking it gently but firmly to them.

The stout little man came in, closing the door softly behind him. His face was moon-round, his mouth small and soft. His eyes were wide-spaced and intelligent, Murphy thought. He had been a successful little grocer.

Moskorp said: "I've been up to the end of the key. . . . My wife is—she is out, just now. I left the door open purposely, in case anyone. . . . My wife likes to have people come and go. She is very gregarious. Yes, that is the word for Della. Gregarious." He rubbed his hands and seemed pleased. Then he said: "But you said you had news for me?"

Murphy said gently: "Bad news, I'm afraid. I've called the Sheriff, but maybe you'd better go along with me first. To identify—" He stopped. He could not pour it to this fumbling, confused little fellow.

Moskorp said: "Is it about a car? Or—something that I might have done? If you're an officer—"

Murphy said: "Just come along. It'll be better that way. I see you have a flashlight." Moskorp was clutching the black cylinder, staring. It was easy to bring him along—he was covering up his worry about his wife very well, Murphy thought, considering the fact that he had every reason to believe she was with another man.

The short drive to the water gave Murphy no time to organize his speech

and in the end he simply turned the coat back from Della Moskorp's face. The little man gave a low, agonized cry and fell upon his knees, his head bowed. There was a long, uncomfortable silence, and then Murphy was embarrassed to realize that the stout little man was not weeping, but praying. . . .

The Sheriff arrived then. He came down close and eyed the body, then lifted his brows at Murphy. Between them they took the bereaved husband away and put him, dazed and broken, into Murphy's car. He sat without seeming to function, just staring ahead, and the two men of the law went back to the corpse.

Langley said: "We got a purty good doc in town. I'll have him go over the body. Can't see much, even with this flashlight. There might be some li'l ol' bruise we can't see."

Murphy said: "I know how you feel—she's the type to get herself killed."

"Gossip's a thing you can't believe—but neither kin you ignore it, specially down here," said Langley. "That boy who was out with Mary Lou tonight. Just a young fella feelin' his oats. But I've heard things. I ain't narrow, Murphy. I let Mary Lou have her head. But that boy—"

Murphy said: "Charley Harrigan never killed anyone."

"My own daughter," muttered the Sheriff. "I'll question her when I get home. My own daughter. . . . You mind how she come in, couple hours ago?"

Murphy said: "I wouldn't go jumpin' at conclusions if I was you, Sheriff. This lady merely got drowned. Have the doc be careful to look for alcohol. This lady is the kind could've got stiff and fell into the drink."

"I'll find out," said Langley. "Appreciate it if you'd work with me, Murphy. If Harrigan done it, you could maybe help me pin it on him."

Murphy said: "Well, I'm a cop. You know cops—never a vacation."

COVERING the body with a blanket, they put it into Langley's big station-wagon. There was no red-eyed ambulance, no rush of photographers, fingerprint men, commissioners or other politicians. It seemed very strange to Murphy, but on the other hand it left things simple and nice. He pondered, going to the Buick.

Back at the cottage, he could not leave Moskorp alone. They went in together, and Murphy turned on all the lights. The grocer's eyes were feverish, and suddenly he began to talk.

"She was young and strong," he said. "How could she? I was in town; then about ten I came home. I saw that picture, that murder mystery."

"I saw it, too," said Murphy. "Maybe you ought to have some coffee?"

"I came home. Della was out. At the jook, I thought, for coffee. I puttered. Listened to the radio. The house always seemed empty when she was not around—any house, wherever we went. She was—she had a lot of life in her, and the house seemed empty."

Murphy said: "Sure. I know."

Moskorp said: "I can't believe it, you know. I just can't." His fat hands strayed, picked up an album from a low table. "See? Pictures. We always took snapshots, wherever we went. Della—she had a figure, didn't she?"

He was sadly proud—or proudly sad—Murphy couldn't decide which. It was a phenomenon he had noticed always, how some people had to talk. Moskorp had it bad. As if he feared that Murphy would leave him alone to whatever terrible thoughts he might have, he talked on and on. Murphy had to take the album and stare at it.

Della had loved posing as near nude as possible. In brief costumes she was on rivers, on boats, on beaches. She was coming out of a pool, dripping, wearing a silk suit, staring straight at the camera, bold, calculating. "Our old pal Fritz Donner took that one," Moskorp was babbling. "And I took this at Jones Beach the summer it opened."

Murphy said easily: "You stayed at Jackson's place until you came down here, at twelve?"

"Yes," said Moskorp. "We talked. About things. . . . They are very friendly. Now here we are in New Mexico. In 1943. Della and I were married in '42, you know. She had such vitality! I can't believe it, you know."

"Is that Donner?" asked Murphy, looking at a muscular, hairy man who bent solicitously over a reclining Della on a white beach.

"No, that's Andy Carr. Another pal," Moskorp explained. "At Miami, in '45. Oh, we had great fun. My business about runs itself, you know, and we traveled all the time. Della just loved it, and so do I." The feverish voice went on and on.

In the end, the bald head nodded, and the voice trailed off. Murphy said: "I wish you'd go to sleep now. I'll stay till you make it."

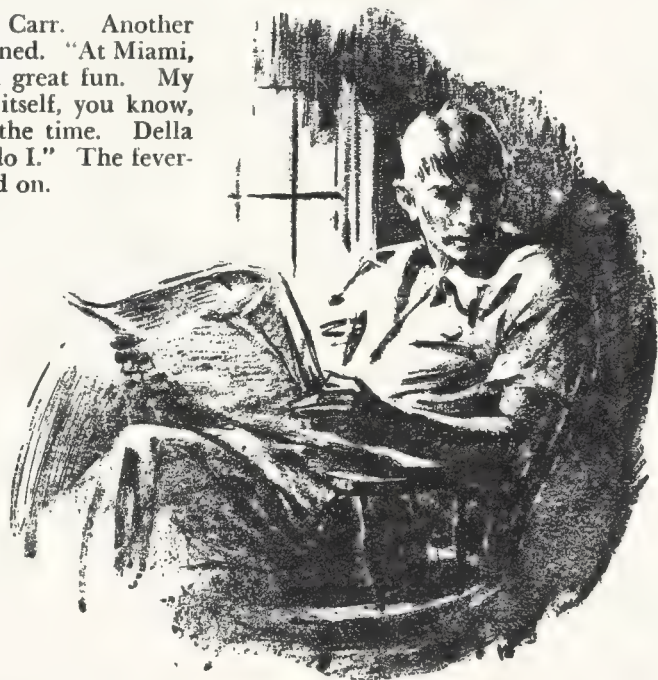
He got the little fat grocer into the room which held the man's clothing; and as the reaction set in, watched him fall into a stupor, snoring. Then he went out and searched the house from one end to the other, with great thoroughness, replacing everything exactly as he found it, missing nothing.

He learned too much about the woman. Dead, she became a problem in police work, and he needed to know everything; and that was all right. But he found himself glad she was dead. There was even heroin, in a pill-box; and concealed beneath some lacy underthings, a hypo needle which might or might not have been recently used.

He stole back into Moskorp's room and it was just the opposite. No part of the little fat man was exposed in his belongings. There were just odds and ends of clothing and fishing tackle. There was not a scrap of paper, not a piece of the pattern which did not proclaim him the colorless background for an evil, passionate, restless woman of no morals.

MURPHY paused in the doorway, looking at the recumbent, rotund figure beneath the single sheet. He shook his head and went softly out of the room and into the bathroom, off a small hall.

The tub had been recently used—he could see the flecks of water clinging to the porcelain, and there was a damp towel. The medicine cabinet contained a raft of stuff, some of it interesting, Murphy thought. There were several barbiturates; and two of the bottles on the shelves could have



His name was Willy Aswell, it seemed, and he was a fishing guide, if Murphy wanted to fish.

induced death if partaken of in overdosage. There was an electric razor and an old-fashioned straight razor and a safety razor. The Moskorps had, between them, every sort of depilatory, and four different scents mingled to assail Murphy's olfactory nerve. He went out, shut off all the lights and left the house.

His clothing was damp and wrinkled, and there was a bad taste in his mouth, and he drove as fast as he could to his cottage. He went in and snapped a switch, and the living-room filled with light. He stared at the lean, blond head of Charley Harrigan on the couch, and went into the bedroom to change into pajamas.

WHEN he came out, Charley was awake, rubbing his eyes. As he became fully conscious, the young man started, swallowed hard and sat up straight. He said: "Murphy—Murphy, I've been waiting for you."

"Uh-huh," said Murphy. "How'd you find out about the woman bein' drowned?"

"Drowned?" And Charley blinked. "You couldn't drown Della. She swims like Eleanor Holm."

"Yeah. I found that out," said Murphy. "But she's dead."

"Dead?" Charley shook his head. "Why—she made a scene with all the trimmin's, about ten o'clock, down at the humpbacked bridge. Mary Lou and I were parked there, and she came up on us and—whew! It was rough, Murphy. I've been a damned fool, playin' around with Della. I mean—well, she's married to this dopey little jerk Moscorp, and she wanted to have some fun, and—well, I've been a damned fool. I was going to ask you to comb her out o' my hair, somehow or other. . . . Mary Lou was so humiliated. It was awful."

Murphy said: "Ten o'clock, huh? You're pretty sure?"

"Yeah. I'm sure. . . . Mary Lou is a good girl. We were talking about things. I was beginning to find out how good it is to talk to a nice girl. You know me, Murphy. I've been an awful jerky kid. When Della came along and started that nasty talk of hers—it wasn't good, Murphy. It was awful."

Murphy said: "Supposing she went back to the Bay side of the key, and tripped and fell into the water? It was dark. Maybe something entangled her, huh?" He added half to himself: "The doctor'll know about that. There's not much use going ahead until the doc reports."

"I can't believe she's drowned," said Charley. He rubbed at his close-cropped head. "I wanted to tell you, Murphy, you'll have no trouble with me. I'm a reformed character now. Whatever Unk Harrigan wants, I'll do it."

Murphy said: "What I want you to do is remember everything that you did last night. Everything! Think it over, keep it straight in your mind and be ready."

"You mean—about Della? People will think—" The boy's eyes grew large. "Certainly they will! My God, I have been a damned fool, Murphy. This is terrible. At this time—with Mary Lou already knowing I've been such a heel—"

Murphy said: "It's bad Mary Lou should have a low opinion of you. But it's worse if her father does, remember that. He's the law down here."

"I see what you mean." Charley got up and walked to the door. "Sure, Murphy. I'll remember everything. And I'll think about it, too."

The door closed very gently. Murphy sighed. His clothing needed hanging up somewhere. He was very weary. It had been a long day. He padded into the kitchen, and found a light which showed a back yard and a clothesline.

He came back into the house and waited. It was cool, and he donned his dark trousers and a soft shirt and padded about, knowing he could not sleep. He was lean and houndlike, almost tireless, but it had been a long day. He rubbed his chin, went into the bathroom and shaved, slowly and deliberately. It always made him feel better to shave.

THE phone rang, and he pounced upon it. Langley's slow voice said: "Doc says she was drowned, all right. No marks. No poison, near as he can tell quick. Musta been about thirty, he allows. She coulda been in the water alive sometime afore that, swimmin'. Or somethin'."

Murphy said carefully: "She was alive, and on land, at ten."

Silence. Then Langley said: "You know somethin', Murphy. Is it that boy? You and him got cars alike—from the same State."

Murphy said in his cop's voice: "You better question your daughter and call me back. She looks like she'd tell the truth."

"Oh?" More silence. Then there was a click.

Murphy walked the floor. There had been a snapshot of Della Moscorp, a few years ago, maybe, swimming with a crawl stroke. Moscorp had shown it to him. Moscorp had shown him the other men in her life. . . . The babbling, grief-stricken little man had pointed it up in his grief and confusion. But Charley was with the girl Mary Lou, who could not pretend, could not hide things. It would come out.

He heard someone outdoors. He walked to the door, flung it open. A small form drifted toward darkness,

then came back with reluctance. It was Willy Aswell.

"Kinda late, ain't it?" Murphy said. "Come in."

Aswell dragged his feet a little, but sat on a chair, his foxy face turning this way and that. "I was out on the boat, fishin' a little. Night-fishin's good in the Bay."

Murphy said: "Sing, Aswell. I got you faded."

"I knew you were a cop." Aswell was glum. "Spotted you quick. Ain't no place to run. . . . I was down near the Moscorp place. Heard a splash. Big fish could jump and splash, but this was special, see? Bigger."

"Off the Moscorp dock?"

"Yeah. So what of it? I cruise, driftin'. I'm down by the pass, and I see you come onto the humpbacked bridge. I see you jump into the water. I do not wait to see much more—only that you got the Moscorp babe in your arms."

Murphy said: "Aswell, that makes you the most important witness to this thing."

"I can't be no witness," said Aswell. "I did a long stretch. I got a parole right now. I ain't goin' back into it, Murphy. I figure to tell you what I know, but that's all. I don't want no part of courts—and who'd believe me, anyhow? I figure—"

Murphy said patiently: "Okay, Aswell. Maybe we can work it out. But I got to know."

"Sure. You got to know could she have drifted down there between the time I heard the splash and when you yanked her out," said Aswell. "Me, I know the run of the tide. I can tell you."

Murphy said: "Okay. Let's have it." He knew it would not be that simple. Nothing about the convict turned fisherman was simple. Aswell, in his retreat from the outside world, had become a hunted animal. Safe on Lifeboat Key, he meant to remain inviolate.

ASWELL said: "I'm givin' you the deal, see? I'll come clean—but you got to gimme an out. I ain't goin' back to it. I'm a two-time loser, and the next time is—"

The telephone rang. Murphy said: "Just step outside, will you, Aswell? This is official business." He picked up the receiver and heard Langley's voice, quicker now, with a slight tremor beneath the surface. Aswell went out, as silent as the night.

Langley was saying: "Mary Lou talked. They seen this Moscorp woman. It was near the humpbacked bridge. There was a ruckus. Then Harrigan got outa the car and dragged the woman away. He was mad. He was gone mebbe fifteen minutes. Then he come back, and they spent the next forty-five minutes arguin'



"I can smell it's been fired," said young Harrigan perplexedly. "Say-y-y! Who's that on the ground?"

about it, and him and that woman. I'm comin' out to get him, Murphy. He killed her and chucked her into the water. She caught on a bush or somethin', and you found her when you did."

Murphy said: "You're wrong, Sheriff. I've got—" He paused. He said: "Well, no use me butting in. This is your bailiwick. You do as you think best."

He hung up. Then he turned out his lights and went outdoors. He had to do several things, and he was getting very weary. He had to get Aswell's testimony first, even if only to assure himself of the truth. Then he would have to arrange for Aswell to take Charley out on the water for awhile, until he could bring things to a head.

He said: "Aswell!"

There was no answer. The foxy little man had been frightened off, Murphy thought. He had been poised on the brink of flight all the time, probably ever since he had seen Murphy with the body of Della Moskorp. . . .

There was still Charley Harrigan. Murphy moved quickly to the cabin next door, where Charley had been staying, a distance of about sixty feet. He tripped over something and fell, sprawling. On hands and knees he stared, thinking even then that the

moon in its coolness had an awful lot to look upon, and wondering how the lunar disk remained cool.

Aswell was twisted into a question mark on the sand. One foot was stretched, as though he were still trying to run; the other was curled beneath him. There was no pulse, no heartbeat. For a moment Murphy could detect no wound.

Then he saw the blood, soaked into the sand. In that light he could only surmise it was blood, but a small hole in Aswell's neck corroborated his theory. He was peering closely at a bullet wound when he heard Charley Harrigan's voice.

"Murphy! Hey, Murphy! Someone's been prowling around here, fooling with my rifle."

Young Harrigan stood, naked save for shorts, in the doorway of his cabin. He bore in his hands a .22 rifle, a light job, almost a toy.

Murphy said: "It makes such a light sound—I couldn't have heard it while I was talkin' to Langley. . . . Can't you feel it's hot, Charley?"

"I can smell it's been fired," said young Harrigan, perplexedly. "Say-y-y! Who's that on the ground?"

"The witness who could give you an alibi," said Murphy. He got up and dusted sand from his knees. "Langley'll be out to arrest you, son. Don't argue with him. I'm going down the

road; and maybe I'll have you out before they stick you in the gow."

Charley said: "Why—that's Willy. Who would want to kill Willy?"

"I hope to find out," said Murphy. "You didn't kill Della Moskorp and dump her in the Bay, did you, Charley?"

"I'd have liked that," said Charley. "She gave me a fit. I told her off, and she swore she'd get square with me and went away. She was swinging her hips even then—ugh! What a damned fool I've been! Maybe I deserve to be arrested, at that."

"With your prints all over that rifle, you ain't goin' to miss it," said Murphy. "Tell Langley what happened, in case I don't see him before he gets here. And don't argue about anything, you hear?"

Charley said: "All the argument's gone out of me. Golly, what would I do if Unk hadn't sent you down here? I'm cured, Murphy, honest I am."

BUT Murphy was already in the car. He went very swiftly down the road. He turned off and came to the Moskorp cabin, and cut the ignition and let the car coast to the closed, silent house.

The door was still unlocked. He padded in just as the Sheriff's car whizzed by, going toward the Jackson cottages. He turned on the lamp in



The grocer fell sidewise, and the gun went against the wall; Murphy put his foot on it.

the living-dining-room and looked about him. All seemed as he had left it.

He tiptoed to the door of Moskorp's room. The fat little lump under the bed-covers lay on its side, as Murphy had last seen it. Murphy went across the room with the caution of a burglar, and sat on the edge of the bed. A spring creaked as he put a hand out to steady himself.

The lump stirred. Moskorp said sleepily: "Is it time to fish the early tide, darling?"

Then his short arms flailed; he sat erect, tearing at the bedclothes, staring wildly. "Della! Della!" he cried. "I've had a terrible dream, Della!"

Murphy said: "I'm afraid 'twas no dream, Mr. Moskorp. Now take it easy. The Sheriff'll be comin' by with Charley Harrigan. He has just gone to arrest the boy for murderin' your wife."

"Murder? But she drowned! How could he have? But he could, couldn't he? . . . That boy! She had spurned him. She had spurned him, sir. That blond boy! Always after her."

"Like those other men, in the photo album?" asked Murphy gently.

"All of them," said the fat little man. "Della was so beautiful. She had trouble with all of them."

"It never annoyed you?"

"Certainly it annoyed me." Moskorp gathered the covers about his

pudgy body with dignity. "But I had faith in Della. I *knew*. I prayed for them, sometimes. I am a religious man, sir. I prayed. But Della could handle them."

"I guess you are right," said Murphy. He got up and went out into the living-room again. There were some books on a shelf, and he looked at them. He saw the name of Edmund Pearson, the late crime-story anthologist, and touched the volume. He did not open it. . . .

Moskorp's trousers were too tight and too short, and his bald head glistened redly in the lamplight. He sat upon a chair and said earnestly: "I do not see how Harrigan could have done it. He isn't that sort. I'm scarcely normal in my mind—at this time. But I don't see how he could have."

"The Sheriff thinks he knows how it was done," said Murphy. "Willy Aswell, the fishing guide, was shot and killed outside Harrigan's cabin a while ago. Langley will say that Harrigan is homicidal and dangerous to anyone who crosses him."

"He seems a normal boy," said Moskorp. He shook his head. "I've done some reading—I'm a great reader, sir. You say you are a police officer? Of course, you did say that. Then you know more than I."

Murphy said: "There's a time element. You saw the picture tonight in town. The second show, of course."

Moskorp said: "Yes, the second show. . . . Wasn't it a coincidence? Violence. Murder." He shuddered, and seemed about to go to pieces again.

"The guilty person was a mental case," said Murphy. "It was a clever story, at that. Many apparently normal folks are not right in the think-tank, of course. It was logical that the woman should kill the banker, didn't you think? But no—these movie people always have a switch, and it always works out neat. So then it had to be the boy, mentally upset, wonderin' about his mother—"

"Yes," said Moskorp. "That is it. The boy, worrying about his mother. You feel a sort of sympathy. . . . But Harrigan, if he killed my wife, must suffer! The Bible says a tooth for a tooth—"

"It starts 'an eye for an eye,'" Murphy murmured. The Sheriff's car was swinging in. He watched Moskorp.

THE little grocer came to his feet. He managed, in a second or two, to acquire almost a regal dignity. The door was assaulted, and Moskorp opened it, stepping aside, head back, looking straight at Langley.

There were handcuffs on Charley Harrigan. He looked at Murphy, and the beginning of panic may have been in him, but the old Irish was there, Murphy thought. His lips were

firm and his eyes steady. Langley said something about the arrest, speaking to Moskorp.

Then Murphy said: "Yeah, like I say, there's always a switch. And there's usually a witness, even in a dinky place like this. Few people, but all of 'em goin' about their own curious ways. Like Willy Aswell."

"Aswell's dead in the back of my car," said Langley curtly. "Shot by this boy."

"Shot with his gun. A neat job," said Murphy. "Did you ever wonder how Harrigan drowned the woman and came back to the car all dry? I assume he was dry. Mary Lou would have known if he wasn't."

"There'll be a mark on her," said Langley. "One the doc missed."

"And did you wonder why he stood with the gun in his hand, askin' me about a prowler, with his victim lyin' dead under me?"

"There was no place for him to run," Langley pointed out.

"That's what Aswell said, when he told me about the tide, and the splash off the dock, whilst Harrigan and your daughter were arguin'," said Murphy. "No place to run."

"About what? Aswell told you? Now, Murphy, I know you're a friend of the prisoner," said Langley. "But no shenanigans down here."

"The tide. It runs just so," said Murphy. He did not know how, so he did not try to tell them. It would be figured out by experts. He only wanted to get through with it. "A man throws a body into it, the body will drift after it sinks a bit, then come to the top in shallows, like at the pass. A dead body will drift just so fast. Aswell heard the body go in, saw me take it out. Then someone shot Aswell before he could tell it all."

Langley said: "A dead witness, Murphy?"

"Well, mebbe you saw the moving picture in town," said Murphy. "You remember how, although the witness couldn't testify, the boy was caught anyway?"

"The boy? It was the woman—"

Murphy moved. He had spotted the drawer in the small table on which the lamp sat. There had been nothing in it when he had searched the place, but it was a logical spot for a weapon.

At that, the little fat man could move with amazing speed. He had the automatic out when Murphy got to him. He was aiming it at Charley Harrigan.

Murphy gave him the Chinese slap, using both hands on the grocer's wrist. The gun went off, and a hole appeared in the ceiling. The grocer fell sideways and the gun went against the wall, and Murphy put his foot on it.

Murphy said: "Homicidal maniac, could be. Religious—but a bit of a

fake, unable to quote the Bible. Went to the show, all right, but didn't wait for the end. And he guessed wrong. I trapped him into it. You saw what happened, Sheriff, when you set him straight on the ending. The movies were not tryin' to be that clever, in this one."

Langley said: "Now wait, Murphy."

Murphy was suddenly very sleepy. Moskorp struggled up and mumbled something about innocence. Murphy said: "Pah! Prayin' over her. Even before I spotted the Pearsoy book, I knew—or guessed. There was still water in the bathtub; there was the towel. You weren't clean enough. . . . And then I came back here after Aswell was killed and put my hand under your covers, and the bed wasn't warm enough. You slipped out, followed me down, took Harrigan's gun and killed Aswell, because he knew you had killed your wife."

Langley said: "This little man?"

"He read about it. George Joseph Smith, an Englishman," said Murphy. "In the days of tin bathtubs, he drowned his wives by holding their ankles up with his left hand and their heads down with his right. In a tub, with a little soap around, you're mighty helpless, Sheriff. . . . He musta had some trouble gettin' her shorts back on. . . . Ugh!"

Langley said: "You've got no proof, Murphy!" But there was a key in his hand, and he was reaching for the wrists of the blond youth.

"The tide," said Murphy. "I'll testify. Aswell told me part of it. The rest'll come out. It's circumstantial, of course. But Harrigan will spend money to find some of the other men in Mrs. Moskorp's past, make a complete picture. And he said he was

at the movies, and he wasn't. And Mary Lou gives Harrigan an alibi if Mrs. Moskorp wasn't killed whilst she was in the woods with the boy—and she wasn't. Because she'd have drifted out into the Gulf by the time I got to the bridge—they were right at the bridge. And there won't be any abrasions—the doc was right. It's double murder, Sheriff, and if you don't keep him under lock and key, he'll do in some more of us. Harrigan, for sure. And me."

LANGLEY said: "Motive he had, I'll admit. . . . And he went for that gun. He—he jest don't look like a killer, Murphy." He put the cuffs on Moskorp. The little grocer lurched and mumbled, his eyes vacant.

"He looks like a nut—he hopes," said Murphy. "His wife gave him a lot of trouble. Mebbe he is nuts. That's your worry. Could you take Charley along with you? He'll keep me up all night if you don't—and I imagine your daughter could listen better to all his plans and reformations. Which I have no doubt are genuine, for when the Irish reform, they are worse than the most pious fanatic. I'm sleepy, Sheriff, and weary. And I'm thinkin' that Florida is no different from the Old Neighborhood. . . . There's bad and good, and love and hate and life and murder. Good night, Sheriff."

He almost fell asleep driving the Buick back to Jacksons'. He found that couple wide awake, brewing coffee. He drank a cup and told them what had occurred, and then he was not sleepy at all. He began speculating on the case, his testimony, how it would build up.

He was a cop, that was it. Vacations are not for cops.

SPORT SPURTS

by Harold Helfer

THE Brooklyn Dodgers had to put Pete Reiser in left field because when he played center he was always running into the fence.

* * *

Orrin Parks, playing for Sparks High in Reno, Nev., kicked a football 190 yards, plumb out of the stadium—the pigskin got caught in a sandstorm, it seems.

* * *

When Woodrow Wilson High defeated Belmont High, 32-25, in Los Angeles, the players were so busy running and passing that there wasn't a single punt by either team during the entire football game.

* * *

Branch Rickey, president of the Brooklyn Dodgers, didn't see his team play the sixth game of the World Series, and never goes to Sunday games.

Bob Austin, relief pitcher for Fort Worth in the Texas League, was called to the mound on three consecutive occasions with the bases loaded, and each time retired the opposition without a run being scored.

* * *

Notre Dame got exactly one thousand dollars for playing Army in the first game of the series in 1913. The Irish, because of their limited budget, had to leave their line coach behind; and after the game Notre Dame netted exactly \$87 profit.

* * *

Tami Mauriello, the heavyweight boxer, is really Steve Mauriello. He used the name and birth certificate of his older brother, Tami, so he could get a boxing license at the age of seventeen.



"The Day has dawned. Brothers of the Sign now control this city. Further resistance is useless."

The LAST OUTPOST

"You must do one more tale," he said, and his words were a grim command. "You must do one more story of the days that are yet to be. You dare not refuse. For on its telling may depend the fate of all mankind."

FROM my study window I watched with a frank and half-amused curiosity as he came down our street. He was such a worried-looking little man and—unlike the usual run of book or magazine peddlers of which, to judge by the bulging briefcase under his arm, he was one—so obviously intent on finding one certain and particular address.

The point of ghoulish amusement is, of course, that in our neighborhood homes have no numbers. Our suburb barely clings to the fringes of the city; it is the rare block which boasts more than two or three dwellings. Thus our houses need no numbers and we give them none. Finally he glimpsed me standing at my study window, and started across my lawn. It was a hot day, and my work was not going well. Under such circumstances a writer welcomes an interruption. I stepped forth to meet him.

Call it fate, if you will, or coincidence. Call it anything you wish, to explain why I, of all persons, should have been the one who met the stranger. Whatever you call it, it was the first of a series of surprises too intimate, too disturbingly accurate, to be wholly fortuitous.

For as we approached each other across the lawn, he smiled apologetically; and, "Good afternoon," he said. "Could you tell me which of these houses is the home of Mr. Bond?"

"I'm Nelson Bond," I said; and his eyes lighted.

"You are? What luck! I wonder if—" He glanced in the direction of my study. "There's something I'd like to discuss with you. A matter of the greatest importance."

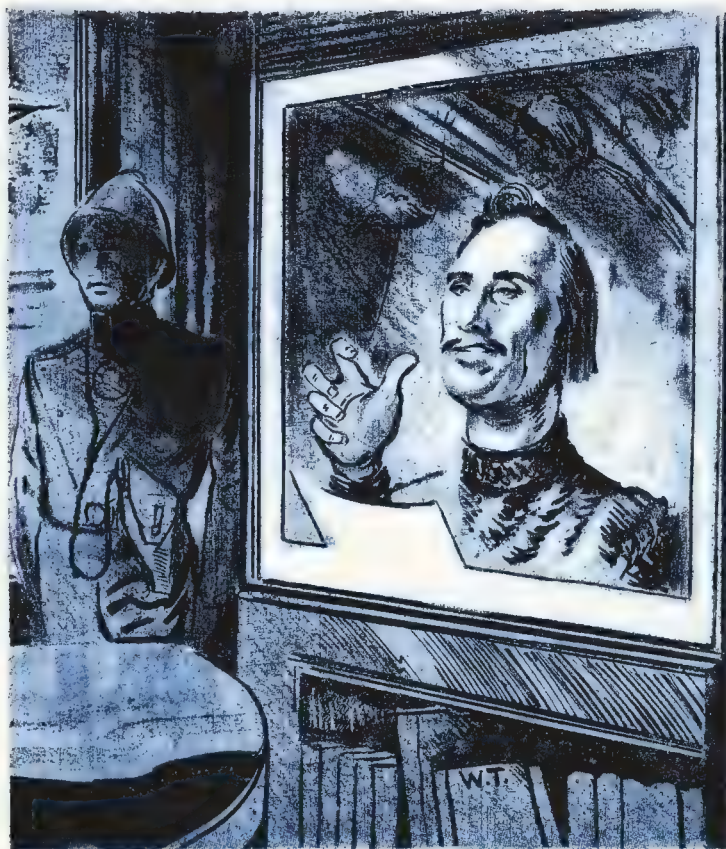
To you, I thought derisively. *An encyclopedia. Or life insurance. Or just possibly an investment trust of some sort. Though why in the world anyone should suspect a writer of having any money to invest—*

But it was a dull day, and any excuse to escape the typewriter was a good one. I led the way indoors. As I cleared space for him on a lounge chair cluttered with a hodge-podge of reference books and old manuscript carbons, he watched me with bright, birdlike interest.

"You're a younger man than I had thought," he said.

I kept a straight face, but I chuckled inwardly. I had him spotted now. *Then it is insurance, I thought. Well, watch him take a powder when I throw my bombshell at him.* In as casual a tone as I could manage I said: "Well, the fat and foolish forties are still a little way off. I guess I'd look even younger if it weren't for this damned ulcer of mine."

That's the opening that quick-freezes insurance men. One whisper of the magic word "ulcer," and they start reaching for their hats. But my visitor started no rush for



We are prepared to subdue without mercy any who—

THIS SHORT NOVEL PRESENTS A DEEPLY THOUGHTFUL AND BRILLIANTLY IMAGINED FUTURE OF THIS WORLD ORGANIZED UNDER AN INTERNATIONAL POLICE FORCE—A GLOBAL POLICE STATE, IN OTHER WORDS, UNTIL REBELLION BRINGS THE DAY OF WRATH.

the exit. He pursed his lips and shook his head miserably.

"You have one too? I'm sorry. Extremely troublesome, aren't they? I've had one for years. Does yours annoy you all the time, or only periodically? Mine seems to act up worst in the early spring and late fall—"

"Sit down," I said, a bit disgruntled. "I'd rather not talk about it, if it's all the same to you. Now—I think you had something to discuss with me?"

HE sat—perched, rather—on the edge of his chair and gazed intently into my eyes.

"Yes, Mr. Bond, I have. But before I begin, let me introduce myself. My name is Westcott—Dr. Arthur Westcott. I am a medical doctor, and a practising psychiatrist connected with—"

The institution he named is one of the South's most famous clinics, specializing in mental ailments. I looked at him with some suspicion.

"Delighted to meet you, Dr. Westcott—I hope! But if you're here to make a case history of me simply because my stories run for the most part to fantasy—"

He leaned forward earnestly.

"I have no intention of making you a case history," he said, "but I *am* here because you are known as an author of fantasies. Fantasies—and science-fiction."

Perhaps I preened myself a trifle. His wasn't much of a compliment, still any writer likes to hear he is "known"

by NELSON BOND

—if only for his *Pro Bono Publico* complaints in the Letters to the Editor section of his local newspaper.

I corrected him gently: "Well—fantasies only, Dr. Westcott. I don't write science-fiction any more."

He stared at me in something remarkably like alarm. "You," he repeated slowly, "don't write science-fiction?"

"Not for a number of years. Five or six, anyway."

"But," he protested, "you must! It's the only way. That's why I'm here. You've got to do it, or Grayson is mad, and the whole thing is a maniac's wild dreaming. And I can't believe *that's* true."

It was my turn to stare at him in something considerably like alarm. I said carefully: "I'm afraid I don't understand, Doctor. Who is Grayson? And why on earth should I write a story for a field of fiction I deserted years ago?"

"On Earth!" laughed my guest—without mirth in his laughter. "On Earth, indeed! It is odd you should use those words."

Then his face was suddenly grave, and his eyes bleak with a vision I could not share.

"You must do one more tale," he said, and his words were a grim command. "You must do one more story of the days that are yet to be. You dare not refuse. For on its telling may depend the fate of all mankind."

IT was a hot summer day in Roanoke. Everywhere the leaves stirred fretfully in the wake of a stifling breeze; in the skies above no wisp of cloud-offered shield to the searing torrent of the sun. There was, then, no reason why it should seem to me that for an instant there touched my nape a breath of chilling wind, heavy and foreboding as the draft that precourses a squall.

No reason, again, why my query that ended the brief silence should have been voiced in something barely more than a whisper. But it was so. There was that about Dr. Westcott—his preternatural gravity, the taut conviction of his plea that was more a demand—which compelled a like intensity.

"Tell me?" I suggested.

He nodded, and touched the briefcase beside him. "I will explain," he said in that curiously stilted, definition-conscious style so frequently found in educators and professional men. "*I* will explain. Only *this* can tell you."

It was a manuscript he drew from the briefcase. In the true meaning of the word, a manuscript—a thick bundle of pages written by hand, not type. Dr. Westcott did not give it to me. I had time to notice only that the writing was sprawling and ill-formed; then my visitor laid the sheets down again.

"I have already told you who I am and what I do. I take it you are familiar with the nature of our clinic and my work?"

I nodded. "Mental rehabilitation. Emphasis on the victims of the recent war. Shell-shock, battle fatigue—that sort of thing."

"Quite correct," nodded Dr. Westcott. "And if I may be permitted to say so, we have had an unusual degree of success in our treatment of these unfortunates, through the use of new and experimental therapies.

"—Not the least among which," he continued in his oddly pedantic style, "is a treatment of the psychotic trauma by hypnosis. You have undoubtedly heard or read something of this technique. Our efforts include conversational hypnosis, post-hypnotic suggestion, and automatic writing."

"It sounds interesting," I said. "Make the patient remember what happened to him—things so terrible his psyche rejected them—and you effect a cure. That's the principle?"

"That," nodded my visitor, "is the basic principle. But suppose—" Here he lifted eyes that were frankly baffled. "Suppose a patient were to remember events which he could never possibly have witnessed? What then would your explanation be?"

I frowned.

"You're talking in riddles, Doctor. The question is a contradiction in terms. No one can 'remember' things he hasn't known."

"Grayson can," said Dr. Westcott simply.

"Grayson?"

"One of my patients. An ex-pilot with the Army Air Corps. The man who wrote this."

He touched once more the manuscript lying face-down between us. I stared at it, then at him, curiously.

"I'm afraid I don't follow you, Doctor." I essayed the light touch. "Which of us is the fantasy addict? You or me?"

"I don't know," replied Westcott ruefully. "I honestly don't know. I wish to God I did. For if Frank Grayson is sane, then all our scientific knowledge is as a sapling in the vast forest of truths yet to be learned—and man's infant culture totters on the brink of a frightful catastrophe. And if Grayson is mad—then I too am mad. For, God help me, I believe him!"

"Please!" he went on hurriedly. "Please don't look at me that way. Let me finish, and listen with an open mind. I came two hundred miles to see you because, whether you will it or not, you are a part of this strange, tangled skein. It may be that you won't believe, as I do. That doesn't matter. Whether you believe or not, there is a story you must write."

"Or, rather, there is a story you must publish. It is *this* story—" He touched yet again the manuscript. "The tale written by Frank Grayson under automatic reflex, when he himself was hypnotized, and had no faintest knowledge what his hand was writing."

"Wait a minute!" I interjected a bit angrily. "You want me to publish under my own name these dream-world ravings of a mental patient? What sort of gag is this? What gives you the idea I'd go for such a—"

"Isaiah," said Dr. Westcott in strangely trancelike tones, "Isaiah, Samuel and Jeremiah. The *na-bi-u* of Babylon, the oracles of Greece. Nostradamus, Joseph Smith—and Billy Mitchell. What is prophecy, and by what wild talent may some men glimpse a fragment of the future?"

"All those I have named, and countless others, were mocked by common mortals for daring to foresay that which was to come. Yet in the ebbing of slow time their prescience was proven. And all too terribly may yet be proven true the prophecy of Frank Grayson."

"This manuscript was written by the *hand* of Grayson—but it was not his brain that dictated its words. Grayson is my patient; I know the way he thinks and the way he talks. These words are his no more than the hand in which these sentences are written is his handwriting. See here!"

He laid before me the final page of the manuscript. Beneath the concluding lines of that sprawling cacography was a final paragraph: "*I, Francis J. Grayson, hereby attest that the foregoing was written by me, under hypnosis, at the times hereafter noted—*"

The statement gave dates and hours. Both statement and signature were penned in a neat, precise hand—the semi-printed script favored by draftsmen and artists. The writing was in no faintest respect like that of the preceding pages.

"Whether this be prophecy or prescience," continued Dr. Westcott, "I do not know. By whatever means Grayson happened forward up the stream of time, the fact remains that McLeod's story is vivid, forceful, and potentially of the greatest importance—"

"McLeod?" I exclaimed. "Who is McLeod?"

"The man who really lived this adventure," answered Westcott. "Kerry McLeod—spaceman, pioneer, and colonist of Earth's outpost on the planet Venus in the year 1985 A.D."

There are times when speech is impossible; this was such a time. I opened my mouth to say something, but no words came. I didn't know what to say, because I didn't know my own reaction to this—this fantastically incredible situation.

If Westcott were a would-be writer, trying to snare me into publishing on my modest reputation one of his fledgling tales, I had every justification for anger. If—on the other hand—this was just a colossal gag hoked up by some of my prankster pals, I'd die before I would let them get me behind the eight-ball, and I would have to try to find some way of turning the laugh on them. So it appeared a clear case of chuckle or fume, one or the other, and that immediately.

Yet there was a disconcerting sincerity in the eyes of my little guest. His were not the eyes of a guileful man. Nor was there any laughter in them.

What finally I should have said, I do not know. It was spared me the necessity of saying anything. For Westcott rose; as he did so, he placed before me the manuscript.

"I will go now," he said, "and leave this with you. I ask of you only one thing: that even though you *doubt*, when you have finished reading it, you do that which the tale tells you must do. No matter what you believe, you dare not gamble on your judgment."

"The tale, you will find, begins and ends abruptly, as began and ended Grayson's curious *rapport* with McLeod. It has several gaps, coincident with Grayson's intervals of nonhypnotic consciousness. The text has errors, both of grammar and fact. Some of these I have already corrected. Feel free to revise others as seems best to you. The degree of auctorial excellence is incidental. It is not important that Kerry McLeod lacks culture. It is of the utmost importance that he be given the message, the clue, that he so direly needs."

He smiled briefly, tentatively.

"I hope," he said quietly, "that you, when you have read, will believe—as I do. And now, I wish you good day."

I watched him down the street and out of sight, the little stranger whose curious advent and demand had roused in me emotions so troubled and confused. And then, of course, I read the manuscript.

Which now, as I was bade, I offer you. It comes to you under my name in a magazine which over a span of years has printed some half-hundred of my stories, the most of them frankly and admittedly fantasies.

How, then, can I convince you that what I this time say is *not* a wild imagining, but chill and sober truth? What protest will convince you that I am but an instrument through which is brought to you the story of a man not yet born?

Only the by-line is mine. The story is the story of Kerry McLeod, colonist of an outpost distant by many millions of miles and many decades of time.

CHAPTER TWO



NE shoved me violently, and another one snatched at my gun. I kicked at the one in front of me, and he fell back spitting curses and teeth. Then I spun and grabbed the hand fumbling at my holster. It was a lean, strong, sinewy hand, but mine was toughened in the Bratislava campaign and on the steppes before Moscow. I twisted, and my attacker screamed as bones grated.

Even so, they would have got to me in a few minutes, for there must have been eight or ten of them surround-

ing me, held at bay only by the fear I might use my gun. The streets were deserted at this late hour, and lightless. There was no moon, and the fitful glare of that damned crimson ball crawling across the sky like a live thing was worse than starlight or no light at all. It cast its red, unhealthy hue on all it touched, until even the shadows seemed dabbled with the color of blood, and they flickered and shifted like furtive, creeping things.

Footsteps shuffled nearer, and a taut voice called, "Don't be a fool, Guardsman! We don't want to hurt you unless you force us. We are your friends, and the friends of all mankind. Throw down your blaster and join with us—"

"And if I don't?" I demanded.

"Then we'll take it, anyway," came the answer; "but you won't live to join us."

"Your opinion," I said. "I've got a full cartridge-clip that says otherwise. Come and get it, Sackies!"

I thought that would anger them, and it did. Other voices merged in a growl, and in the blood-tinted darkness you could feel them tensing for action. If there's anything they can't stand, it's to be called Sackies. I slipped my blaster from its holster, thumbed back the safety catch. I wasn't as confident as I'd tried to sound, but of one thing I was sure: they would take from me no blast-gun to add to their steadily growing arsenal. My cartridges would go before I did.

"As you wish," acknowledged their spokesman. "They who refuse our friendship are our enemies. Brothers—by the Sign!"

I set myself as they came at me in a flood of clawing, fanatic humanity. Not yet did I hit the stud. Too well had been drilled into me the laws of the International Guards Corps: "*Fight solely to keep the peace, and then to disable, not kill.*" With clubbed barrel I struck at them, spinning, whirling, fending them off, fighting to break out of their tightening net. A cudgel glanced off my temple, raked my cheek and jaw, and suddenly I tasted the hot, salt flavor of blood. A weight hurled itself on my back, and the chill of an outlawed knife touched my arm as I stumbled to my knees.

Then came relief, as welcome as it was un hoped for. Twin beams of light swirled around the corner, with whiteness sponging out the sallow shadows, with blinding clarity fixing my attackers in midstride. The distinctive whistle of a patrol siren shrilled, brakes squealed, and a voice cried: "*Hey, what's going on here? Break it up! Break it up!*"

The weight lifted suddenly from my back; encircling arms no longer bound my knees as the Diarist gang took to its heels. Where they disappeared to, heaven only knows; like the rats they were, they scuttled into doorways, alleys, entrances that mysteriously opened to receive them, then as mysteriously closed. In a matter of seconds, I was alone on the street with the two Guardsmen who had hurried to me from the car.

I rose, dusting myself, and they gasped as they recognized my uniform.

"A Guardsman!" exclaimed the patrol sergeant. Then, suspiciously: "But what outfit? You're not local."

"That's right," I nodded. "Lieutenant McLeod, Pan-American Sector." I didn't think it necessary to tell a pair of local watchdogs I was with Intelligence. "Thanks a couple of million for the rescue job. Things looked bad."

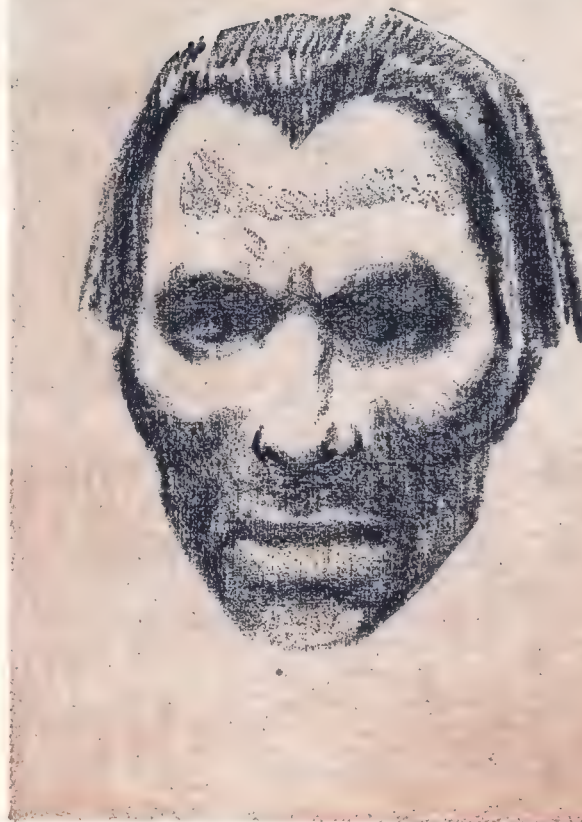
"You look bad. That cut very deep?"

I had felt the steel, but had not realized until he brought it to my attention that the Diarist's blade had gashed my arm from wrist to elbow. It was an ugly slash, but not serious. I wrapped a kerchief about it.

"I don't think so. It will hold till I get a medic to look at it."

"Get him to look at that bump on your noggin, too," suggested the sergeant moodily. "It looks like a twin head."

Illustrated by Wilson Thomson



Diarists—they can't stand to be called Sackies.

I said: "I could use another one—with more brains than the original. A midnight walk alone through this sector wasn't such a bright idea. The Sackies are nasty here, eh?"

"They're nasty everywhere," he grunted; "but Fedhed is infested with the meanest breed." He eyed me thoughtfully for a moment. "I suppose you know you'll have to be taken to sector headquarters for a ref check? You've got your creds?"

I patted my pocket. "All in order, Sergeant."

"You look right," he conceded, "but we can't afford to take chances any more. They've been picking up guardsmen's uniforms as well as arms and ammo. Last month a Fedhed guard turned out to be a Diarist in disguise. We have no idea what secret information he managed to smuggle out to his Sackcloth buddies before we nabbed him. We'll learn that the hard way, I suppose, a few months from now."

"You're right to play it safe," I told him. "And I want to meet the local authorities, anyway. Let's go."

We piled into the patrol car. The headlights bored a tunnel of safety before us as we sped across the avenues of once-populous New York to the massive buildings which are the World Federation Headquarters. Above us that damned sanity-shaking demon watched our progress with baleful scarlet eye. . . .

General Harkrader, commander of Fedhed, motioned me to a chair across the wide mahogany desk from his own. There were cigarettes in a box at my elbow, and a decanter of Scotch on a cellaret beside me.

"Well, Lieutenant," he said, "now that your credentials have been checked and you're patched up, relax and take it easy for a few minutes." He grinned. "We gave you a fine welcome to Fedhed, didn't we?"



"Don't be a fool, Guardsman! We are friends of all mankind. Throw down your blaster and join with us."

"My own fault, sir," I admitted. "I'll know better than to take post-curfew strolls through Diarist districts in the future. But where I came from, the Sackies are scattered, and not at all dangerous."

Harkrader grunted his envy.

"Wish I could say the same. This area is a regular hotbed of 'em! Mass demonstrations, noonday worships, public exhibitions of resistance, passive and otherwise—everything you've ever heard of them doing anywhere else and some you've never dreamed of in your worst nightmares. Where do you come from, anyway?"

"Pan-American," I told him. "St. Thomas."

His brow lifted.

"Oh? Then you're Intelligence?"

"That's right."

He selected a cigarette with slow care, lighted it. "Here on furlough," he asked, not casually enough, "or assignment?"

"Assignment," I said frankly. Then, as a brief apprehension swept his eyes: "But there's nothing for you to be concerned about, General. I'm not here to investigate Fedhed or your command, but to ask your help. We need information."

He seemed almost to expand with relief. It's funny how the rest of the Corps always jells with something akin to horror the moment you admit to being an I-man. It must trace back to the Loyalty Purges. But Lord, those took place 'way back in '71 and '72, when I was a junior cadet on the Island.

"Anything I can do to help, Lieutenant—"

"Good. Here's the sixtifer. What do you know of a man named Douglas Frisbee?"

"Douglas Frisbee? The name rings a faint bell, but I can't seem to recall—"

"He calls himself," I added, "Professor Frisbee, in spite of the edict against such titles."

"Professor—Lord, yes!" exclaimed Harkrader. "Now I remember. He used to be a profess—a teacher at Columbia, here in New York, when that university was still in use as an institution of higher learning."

"Distributing point," I corrected mechanically, "of individualistic fallacies."

"Of course," agreed the Fedhed commander instantly. "I mean simply that—well, I'm thirty years your senior, and we oldsters are inclined to be a bit lenient in our appraisal of the old ways and customs—"

"You were speaking of Frisbee," I reminded him.

"Oh, yes—Frisbee. Nice old fellow. Shade on the dreamy side, as I recall him, but solid—confoundedly solid!—in his field. Which was—"

"Nuclear physics. We know that. What else?"

"Eh? Why—uh—nothing else. You are correct, of course. Frisbee was a nuclear physicist. One of the pioneer students in that field. Studied under Nils Bohr in the early part of the century, worked with the United States Government on the primitive A-bomb experiments of World War II."

"With the U. S. Government? A highly nationalistic man, then?"

"No more," denied Harkrader, "than any man born before the Federation charter was signed. No more than I—and I was a voting adult in 1971, the year the Federation militia seized control of World Government."

"Assumed control," I amended, "under mandate of the freemen. You choose your words rather carelessly, General, to be the commander of so important a post."

"Lieutenant McLeod," he said curtly, "you appear to forget the difference in our rank!"

"And you, General," I answered quietly, "forget the difference in our branches of service. It is my job to learn the facts. If in attempting to do so I offend you, I am very sorry. But your condonement of Frisbee implies sympathy with his ideology. If you yourself have nationalistic leanings, I shall have to ask my superiors to suggest another—"

"No, no!" said Harkrader hastily. "Now, don't jump to conclusions, Lieutenant. I use words poorly, perhaps, but I'm a good soldier. I've commanded this post for a long time without any complaint from anyone. I don't want to tangle up with Intelligence at this late date. I'm not a separationist, and I'm not a crackpot, radical, or troublemaker of any kind. I'm just a middle-aged human who understands—as you Island-bred youngsters will never understand—how the older generation feels about this strange new world we live in."

"Now," he went on, "you were speaking about Douglas Frisbee. What else do you want to know about him?"

"To your knowledge," I asked, "is he connected with Diarist activities?"

HARKRADER stared at me in something like dismay. "Old Frisbee?" he ejaculated. "A Sackie? Damn it, man, the very *thought* is absurd! If you had ever met him—"

"It is my intention to do just that," I said. "For your sake—and for his—I hope our fears are baseless. But the fact remains that Dr. Frisbee's movements during the past year have been most mysterious. According to all reports, his rural retreat has been frequented by an odd, if not sinister, group of associates. An inventory of his purchases discloses the fact that a great and rather alarming amount of dangerous material has been accumulated at his workshop. There is even reason to believe that from somewhere he has obtained a small amount of radioactive ore, and that he is conducting research prohibited by law."

"Old Frisbee!" repeated Harkrader. "I simply can't believe it! Oh, I can understand his accumulating experiment material; that's in nature with his character."

But Frisbee a Sackie? Preposterous! I'd as soon judge you a worshiper of the Sign, or myself—"

"Nevertheless," I told him, "I must meet Frisbee."

"And you shall. I'll arrange transportation to his place right away." He reached for the visiphone. "Would you rather go by groundcar or gyro?"

"Gyro," I said.

And so it was arranged.

IF Douglas Frisbee was engaged in any conspiratorial activity, he was clever enough to have concealed all signs of it perfectly.

I had deliberately elected to travel by gyro to his Long Island dwelling in order that from the air I might get a bird's-eye view of the estate. I got it, and noticed nothing at all suspicious. Frisbee's place was the home of a typical moderately well-to-do gentleman farmer; it had the usual line of evergreens separating its small acreage from adjacent estates and shielding it from the highway, the usual outlay of barns, silos and storage bins, the usual patch of land under cultivation, and the usual formal garden area around an attractive and spacious home in the rather staid and conservative design of the Frank Lloyd Wright era.

It had in addition a large and beautiful artificial lake, upon the shimmering surface of which bobbed a number of small sail- and rowboats. Between this and the house stretched a wide expanse of soft green lawn. It was here we landed our gyro.

Some one—a boy in his teens, I thought at first—saw us and crossed the lawn to greet us as our fans idled. I discovered almost immediately, however, that a slim, youthful figure dressed in sportshirt and slacks had deceived me. Our visitor had bronze hair cut to shoulder length and clubbed in the perennially popular pageboy style. The swing of her walk—the smooth grace of an arm lifted in welcome—the glimpse of golden shadow where the curve of linen collar met the rise of warm young flesh was proof and to spare that this newcomer was very much a woman.

My pilot whistled appreciatively as she approached. "Oh, brother!" he chuckled. "For once in my life they handed me a good assignment. If *that's* what little gal Sackies look like, the Corps just lost a man!"

"That will do, Corporal," I said. I spoke a little more sternly than was necessary, but for some reason or other his attitude annoyed and repelled me. He was a city-bred man, of course, and I should have let that be his apology. On St. Thomas we see few women. Toward the sex, therefore, I have a feeling of curiosity mingled with respect and uneasiness. "Let me remind you that treason, even though spoken in jest, is still treason."

His jaws tightened.

"Yes sir," he said in an odd, indefinably rebellious tone. "I'm sorry, sir."

Then the girl was beside us, watching with undisguised curiosity as we climbed from the gyro.

"Hello!" she called. "You got here early. Dad was not expecting you till—" She stopped in midsentence as she saw our uniforms. "Why," she exclaimed, "you're Guardsmen!"

I saluted. "Yes, miss. Lieutenant McLeod, at your service. Corporal Babacz. This is the home of Dr. Frisbee?"

A look of guarded wariness clouded the gold-flecked bronze of her eyes; and her smile, her initial air of pleased expectancy, had faded.

"It is, Lieutenant. I am Dana Frisbee. Was Father expecting you?"

"No. But I'd like to see him, nevertheless. Is he at home?"

"He's on the grounds somewhere. If you gentlemen will make yourselves comfortable on the porch, I'll find him. Have you had lunch?"

"Yes, thanks. Before we left Fedhed."

"Fedhed! Then this is a—an official visit?"

I said quietly: "If I could see your father, *miss?*"

"Yes. Oh, yes—of course. I—I won't be long."

She turned and left us, disappearing in the general direction of the outbuildings we had seen from *topside*. That she was apprehensive was obvious; that there was some secretive sense of guilt underlying her anxiety was quite possible. I stared after her, frowning.

"It would be a shame," I mused, "for such a girl to be involved in illegal activities—"

Corporal Babacz stared at me in slack-jawed incredulity. "Beg pardon, sir? What did you say?"

I felt myself flush. It was true I had spoken with incautious impulse. A Guardsman should never allow himself to be swayed by personal considerations. But Babacz didn't have to be so damned snide in his amazement at my comment. I am a human. I have a normal man's emotions and sympathies.

"Never mind," I said. "Let's go to the porch."

CHAPTER THREE

DIARIST activities, Lieutenant?" said Dr. Frisbee. "Diarist activities? You're not joking? You mean the Federation is *serious* in its suspicion that I am implicated in the Diarist movement?"

"The authorities never joke, sir," I said severely, "about matters so important. I was sent by Intelligence—"

"The title," said the ex-professor, "is a misnomer. Intelligence is not intelligent if it conceives for one instant that I would ally myself with the forces of superstition, ignorance and terror. Do you know, Lieutenant, just what the Diarist movement is?"

"Of course. An organized attempt on the part of an exhibitionist cult to overthrow the World Federation."

Frisbee shook his head, and sighed a bit sadly.

"You have been well versed in the semantics of your profession, Lieutenant. Your definition is letter-perfect—but it describes the *goal* of the Diarists, not the reason for the cult's existence. Do you really understand why they call themselves Diarists? Why they debase themselves in smocks of coarse sackcloth? Why they hold public prayer sessions? Why their most solemn oath is 'by the Sign?'"

I said, "It has something to do with the comet—"

"Something to do? It has *everything* to do with the comet, McLeod! Tell me—are you an educated man?"

I told him proudly: "Well, sir, I took my schooling on the Island, and graduated *summa cum laude* from the Federation Military Academy."

"I see. Then you are not educated—"

"My dear Doctor!"

"You are not educated," repeated Frisbee imperturbably, "in subjects of real and lasting importance to mankind. You have been, I do not doubt, well schooled in the so-called 'science' of military tactics and maneuver; you have learned political dogma, and absorbed a certain amount of more or less distorted history—"

There was a sound suspiciously like a snicker at my elbow, but when I turned to look sharply at Babacz, he met my gaze with straight-lipped gravity. Dana Frisbee, on the other hand, was openly amused. Her lips curved in a smile that was more than polite friendliness, and in her tawny eyes the gold flecks danced and sparkled.

It was not a warm day, but I felt the sting of perspiration on my throat and brow.

I said carefully: "Dr. Frisbee—I think it is only fair to warn you that you are already under investigation for suspected disloyalty to the Federation. I shall have to make an official report on this interview. If you persist in your treasonable attacks on the Government—"



"It would be a shame," I mused, "for such a girl to be involved in illegal activities."

"Treasonable fiddlesticks!" exploded the physicist. "Since when has it become treason for a man to speak his mind on any subject of his choosing?"

"The trouble with you, young man—" And he leaned forward and shook his finger in my face as if he were still a teacher admonishing some recalcitrant student. "Your trouble is that you know nothing of life—*nothing*, sir!—except the pitiful *potage* of propaganda which they've shoveled down your gullible young throat at that monstrous academy!"

"No—sit down!" he thundered as I started to rise. "I'm not through talking yet. You came here to interview me, get my views on certain subjects. Well, you shall have them. If you want to arrest me when I'm finished, so be it. But at least I shall have the satisfaction of getting off my chest a lot of words that have needed airing for a long time."

"Dad—" ventured Dana Frisbee.

"Later, my dear. Right now I'm going to give these two young dupes of a corrupt and tyrannous autocracy a little lesson in history. You, sir—" He glowered at Babacz from under his shaggy white brows: "When was the World Federation formed?"

Babacz was wholly under the old pedant's spell. He parroted reply as if reciting in a grade-school classroom.

"The World Federation of Sovereign Nations was conjoined in 1961 and ratified by a majority of member states in the same year."

"Correct!" snapped Frisbee. "Note that the Charter designated those member states as *sovereign* nations. And now you, sir: For what purpose was created the military force of which you are an officer?"

"The World Federation Guards Corps," I replied, "is composed of selected youths of all member states, in ratio to the population of those states. It serves to preserve international harmony—"

"Hal!" interjected Frisbee savagely.

"—protect individual liberties—"

"Hal!"

"—and prevent the encroachment of force or ideals by any group upon any other portion of the world populace—"

"Enough!" said Frisbee. "Those were the principles on which our predecessors twenty-odd years ago agreed to surrender their ancient heritage of sovereign rights, in order to create what they hoped might be a finer union of all mankind."

"But was this dream accomplished? No! Because the very tool with which the Federation hoped to implement

a high ideal turned out to be its weapon of destruction. The Guards Corps! It was the Guards Corps itself that ten years after the ratification of the Federation Charter, in 1971, ruthlessly took advantage of the fact that it was the only armed body in existence, and in a series of lightning moves overthrew the Government, then set up its own military oligarchy.

"It was the Guards Corps which put into effect the drastic and oppressive code under which we now—"

—(At this point, regrettably, occurs one of those interruptions in the narrative of which I was forewarned by Dr. Westcott. This is doubly unfortunate—first, because Douglas Frisbee's post facto commentary on that fragment of "history" which is still to us the unguessed future should be of vast interest; second, because the manuscript resumes confusingly at a later time and in other surroundings.)

(Anticipating the reader's natural curiosity, let me advise that the tale appears to resume about a day later, and that without making an arrest, Lt. McLeod has returned to the Federation Headquarters, or as in the easy vernacular of that era he calls it, Fedhed.)

"Six riot calls since sunrise," he growled, "and more yet to come, or I miss my guess. I've called Boston and Philadelphia for reinforcements. They both turned me down on the same grounds: no can do. The Sackies have opened up with mass demonstrations in their cities too. And judging by the tele reports"—he gestured hopelessly at the papers strewn on his desk—"it's the same story everywhere."

I said: "What's behind it, General? Is this one of their holy days, or something?"

"Every day is a holy day to them, damn their hides! And will continue to be as long as that burning devil—" He shook an angry fist at the comet which, spiraling high in the western sky, merged its crimson with the sun's summer gold to flood the room with a weird orange hue. It was that shade of orange found in fog-lamps, on bridges, and in spots where the night mists gather; by its reflection, living flesh looks dead and corpse-like, lips seem swollen to a purplish pulp, and eyes gleam feverishly from heavy-circled sockets. Harkrader shook his fist in futile and impotent rage. "As long as that devil rides the heavens! It's a thing of evil. Its red magic is a spell on the minds of men—"

"It's only a comet," I said. "A comet known to man for centuries! Halley's Comet. Our fathers saw it last time it approached the earth in 1910; their grandfathers saw it in 1835. It's nothing to fear. It's a perfectly natural phenomenon, accurately predicted by astronomers and making its appearance on schedule."

"You know that," grunted the Fedhed commander, "and I know it. But the Diarists don't know it. Ignorant, superstitious scum that they are, they've made it their godhead—named it a sacred Sign to justify their rebellion."

I said: "Well, it's annoying, but I don't think it's anything to get disturbed over. This isn't the first time we have seen Diarist demonstrations."

"No? Speak for yourself, Lieutenant. Never in all my years have I seen an uprising to equal this one. This one is serious! Spontaneous outbreaks in every major city in the world. Deliberate and concerted efforts to disrupt our lines of communication. Demonstrations of violence against any man wearing the uniform of the Guards Corps. Attempts to break into our arsenals and arm their sackcloth rabble— Yes?"

This last was over his shoulder as an adjutant came hurriedly into the room, too excited to observe the formality of knocking.

"The Sackies, sir. The mob surrounding the Central Park Arsenal—"

"Yes? I gave orders they were to be dispersed. It wasn't necessary to fire on them?"

"It was, sir. We did. But—"

"Too bad. I had hoped to avoid bloodshed. Issue a proclamation informing the public the Corps sincerely regrets the incident, and hopes it may not find it necessary to repeat such stringent measures—"

"But that's not it, sir!" cried the adjutant, voice cracking. "We fired on them—but they didn't run. Instead, they attacked in force. There were hundreds—thousands—of them. Many were killed, but the rest came on and on—"

"Speak up, man!" shouted the General. "What is it? What are you trying to tell me?"

"This, sir: That the garrison was wiped out, to the last man. And the Sackies have taken our main arsenal in the New York sector!"

In the silence that followed the messenger's words, General Harkrader turned and stared sightlessly down into the streets below. When he turned again to face us, he had become subtly an older man.

"You see, McLeod?" he said.

I saw. In Central Park Arsenal had been stored matériel sufficient to arm and maintain for an indefinite siege every able-bodied man in the New York area. With the winning of these weapons, the Sackies ceased to be a rabble, became an army equaling the Corps in equipment, outnumbering us perhaps twenty to one.

I said: "You were right, sir. But it's too late to cry over spilled milk. What are we going to do now?"

As if seeking answer himself, he turned and snapped on the video. After a few seconds the screen cleared, to show the familiar newsroom of the FBC's television studio. It was a scene of unreserved chaos and confusion. Forgotten was the traditional smoothness and urbanity of visual newscasting, as a swarm of harassed reporters and analysts jockeyed for space in the equipment-cluttered studio, elbowing each other, sometimes bumping the cameras and making the image shake as their own sense of assurance must be shaking at this tense hour.

BEFORE OUR EYES a reporter tore from one teletype a late report, rushed it to the camera and read it to us:

"*Bulletin: Washington, D. C.: Panic seized this erstwhile capital city of the United States today as Diarists rose in overwhelming numbers to occupy all points of military importance in this strategic sector.*"

"*Bulletin: London, England: A pitched battle rages in the ancient City of London today as hordes of Diarists pit their numerical superiority against the armaments and tactics of a beleaguered handful of Guardsmen. The Diarists now claim control of all terrain north of the Thames, and are advancing in force on the well-fortified Southwark garrison.*"

"*Bulletin: Rome, Union of European Republics: Sons of the Sign, arise! As we have done here, so can you do. Be forthright and brave. The Day has dawn—'*"

The newscaster paled, stopped reading, hastily cast aside the Rome dispatch which offered self-evident proof that the Sackies held control at least of the Rome centers of news dissemination. He resumed:

"*Bulletin: Ottawa, Canada: The Governor-General of the Dominion has asked the local Diarist leader, Brother John Carstairs, for a truce. This request followed closely on the heels of seizure by the cultists of every important warehouse and fortress in this sector.*"

"*Bulletin: Moscow, Federation Mandate: Amid scenes reminiscent of the days of Soviet control, Guardsmen and Diarists today locked forces in a grim battle for control of this city's all-important Krem—'*"

The screen shook suddenly, and the image fogged. A voice—cool, confident—overrode that of the newscaster.

"Here's the latest report, Brother. Let me give it to the public—"

The image cleared. Fronting the camera stood a man clad in the loose sackcloth smock of the Diarist brotherhood. About the newsroom his armed followers rounded up the members of the video staff. The Sackie leader smiled, spoke squarely into the camera's eye.

"*Bulletin: World Federation Headquarters, New York: The Day has dawned. Brothers of the Sign, under the inspiration of their sacred symbol, now control the major portion of this city, seat of the corrupt World Federation government.*"

"*We call upon all oppressed citizens to join us and celebrate the long-awaited Day. To Guardsmen and hirelings of the deposed government who will renounce their former allegiance, we offer full amnesty and Brotherhood in the Sign.*"

"*Further resistance is useless. We are prepared to subdue without mercy any who—'*"

HARKRADER snapped off the video.

"Well," he said heavily, "that's it. A lifetime of building and planning—overthrown in a single day. It seems we made a fearful mistake, gentlemen—the always fatal error of underestimating our opponents."

The adjutant cried: "But there must be *something* we can do, General! They can't have won so final a victory, not in so few hours!"

"Wrong again," sighed Harkrader. "Our strength was never in our numbers. It lay always in the fact that only we had weapons. Once they took the arsenals— Simpson!"

"Yes sir?"

"Gather the men of Fedhed. I want to talk to them. At once, please."

"Very good, sir."

The adjutant saluted and left. Harkrader stared at me somberly.

"I'm going to turn them loose, McLeod. There is no use in their being slaughtered in a hopeless cause. The best we could hope for is a delaying action, and heaven only knows what retribution for our stubbornness."

"And you, sir?" I asked.

"I don't know. What does it matter? My lifework, my career, ended today. Perhaps they will execute me; I cannot say I care greatly. I am an old man. Within my lifetime I have seen strong sovereign nations fight a bloody war to no decision. I have seen man devise a plan for peaceful living, and I have watched that plan go awry. Now—this! What will come of it, I do not know. I do not greatly care."

"But you are young. What will you do?"

"I am a Guardsman," I said.

"You were a Guardsman. The Guards Corps is dead."

"I am a Guardsman," I repeated, "bred and trained on the Island. I will carry on to the last."

Harkrader shook his head.

"Not from here, McLeod. I am surrendering Fedhed."

"There are other places—secret places. Forts the Sackies never dreamed of."

He shrugged. "As you wish. Order what you need in the line of supplies or transportation. That much I can give you."

"But first," I said, "I must return to Long Island. Frisbee warned me this was coming. He is not with us, but he is not with them, either. And he knows something—something great and important that he would not tell me. It is my duty to go back and learn his secret."

"Frisbee!" said Harkrader. "By Jove, yes! I think you've got something there, McLeod. He may be our last hope. Lieutenant, give me fifteen minutes. And then—I'll go with you."

"It would be an honor, sir," I told him.

Thus it was that a quarter hour later Harkrader and I, in a gyro with Corporal Babacz again at the controls, took off from the roof of the Federation Headquarters on

the first leg of a journey which was to carry us farther than our minds in wildest dreaming could ever have imagined.

CHAPTER FOUR



OUR landing at Frisbee's refuge was in strange contrast to our first visit there. Then the only one to meet us had been Dana; this time the poising of our gyro for vertical descent brought running to the field so startling a number of people that I could hardly believe my eyes.

It was a motley group. The only thing its members, of whom there were at least fifty, appeared to have in common was youth. All, with the exception of the scientist himself, were of my own generation. There similarity ended, diversity began. About half were young women or girls; a part of these were dressed in normal street clothes; others were laboratory smocks; still others were clad—like the majority of the men—in grease-stained jumpers.

Those men who were not in workclothes were dressed variously in executives' day-briefs, technicians' pileproofs, or similarly designed garments for special jobs. I noted two or three wearing portions of the distinctive rubberized suits used by divers for work in shallow submarine depths.

Harkrader glanced at me in frowning bewilderment.

"You didn't mention anything like this, McLeod."

"I didn't *see* anything like this yesterday."

"Maybe," suggested Babacz, "he *is* mixed up with the Sackies, after all?"

"I don't believe so. Where these people came from, I have no idea. But you'll notice they don't wear the smocks of the Brotherhood."

Our tricycle gear touched ground; Babacz halted the fans as the gyro bounced and settled. Instantly a solid wall of determined young bodies hemmed us in. A voice asked: "Who are you, and what do you want here?"

Then there was movement through the crowd, and Frisbee appeared.

"It's all right, Warren," he said quietly. "I know these men. They are not our enemies."

"They're Guardsmen, Professor," called one savagely. "All Guardsmen are our enemies."

"Man's greatest enemy," replied Frisbee in his best classroom manner, "is his animal instinct toward herd action. I will take care of this. The rest of you will please return to your tasks. And hurry! Remember that every minute, every *second*, is precious now."

Reluctantly, not without some grumbling and ominous backward looks, the group split and sifted away, leaving only Frisbee and his daughter. Dana wore stained denim coveralls, and her bronze-gold hair was caught in a faded kerchief. But she was beautiful. Her hands were oil-stained, and there was a smudge of carbon black on her nose, but I found her breathtaking in her loveliness. She smiled at me, and I could tell that she too was remembering that brief moment in the garden.

Frisbee said: "You are Harkrader. It's been a long time since we've met, John."

"Almost thirty years, Professor," nodded Harkrader. "I graduated with the class of '57."

He used the old title quite instinctively and without seeming to know he had done so. Frisbee had that curious effect on people. Ultramodernist that he was, he retained an air about him of the old days.

"Yes. That was a good class. One of the last free classes. In it were men of bright promise. Yourself—Harry Sanders—Lou Chauvenet—Aaron Jablonski—"

I listened half appalled and yet in awe. If these had been Harkrader's classmates, it had indeed been a year

of great if oddly various men. All the names were famous—or infamous. Harold Sanders was Permanent Chairman of the World Health Commission. Louis Chauvenet, renowned for his astrogational research, had for a decade blazed new trails toward space-flight, and with the disappearance of his ill-fated Luna expedition in 1978, had become a legend. Aaron Jablonski had died with his stubborn little army of Loyalists at Cincinnati in the Nationalist Rebellion of 1973-'4.

"Men of bright promise," repeated Frisbee. "I fear we shall not soon see classes like that again." And he shook his head. "This is an evil day, John. The twilight has ended, and darkness falls."

"Then you've heard the news?"

"Yes."

"We heard nothing while flying here," I interposed. "Are the Diarists successful *everywhere*?"

"Almost everywhere. A few cities, some of the more remote garrisons, hold out. But the movement snowballs as the Brothers gain arms and converts. They hold airports now, and are flying reinforcements and supplies to stubborn sectors."

"Paris has fallen," said Dana, "and Berlin and Fort MacArthur in the Philippines. The Diarists control all South America from Tierra del Fuego to the Gulf, excepting only the supply depot in the Matto Grosso. Asia is—"

"The Island?" I demanded. "They have not yet taken the Island?"

"Island? Which island?"

Frisbee smiled at his daughter.

"To an I-man, my dear, there is only one island."

"St. Thomas," I elucidated. "Intelligence G.H.Q."

"Oh—in the Virgins? No. We heard no report from there."

I smiled grimly.

"And you won't. The Sackies planned well, but they planned futilely. We still have a few aces up our sleeve."

FRISBEE glanced at me shrewdly from beneath silvery brows.

"Such as?" he challenged.

"Well-manned garrisons," I told him, "in places the world doesn't even suspect. Antarctica, Van Diemen's Land—no need to tell you where. But I think the Sackies may start chanting a different hymn when the plutes start falling."

"Plutes!" cried Frisbee. "Plutonium bombs? But—but you can't do that! Atomic warfare was outlawed more than twenty years ago."

"In warfare," I reminded him, "between *powers*. But this is different. This is world revolt against a recognized authority. The end justifies the means—"

"You fools!" roared the physicist. "You stupid and overbearing damned fools! Don't you realize the authority of your government has been challenged because it is dictatorial and venal? Because men would rather die than live under such restrictions as you have placed on them?"

"Would you rather see a world governed by religious fanatics? Madmen in sackcloth smocks who worship a comet?"

"I'd rather see such a world than no world at all!" Frisbee ran shaking fingers through his unruly shock of hair. "I dislike the Diarist rebellion and its precepts. But I was prepared to accept it for a time as the lesser of evils. Now the choice is out of my hands, out of the hands of all men."

"You're getting excited over nothing," I said. "In a few days the revolt will be brought under control—"

"In a few days," cried the scientist, "the earth on which we live may no longer exist! McLeod—did it never occur to your precious Intelligence that the conspirators may have atomic weapons too?"

I stared at him, dry-lipped. The thought *had* never occurred to me, I freely acknowledge. Not until that moment! Now suddenly I realized what could happen if by any chance he were right. In my second year of training as a cadet we were taken to the Safety Zone around what used to be the Oak Ridge experimental station, and were shown the results of the catastrophe there. That pile had exploded some nine years before, but the terrain for a thirty-mile diameter about the gigantic crater was still violently radioactive. Our Geigers reported a lethal +12.4 factor—and we were viewing the scene from an elevation of twelve thousand feet.

I answered: "But—but they can't! Atomic matériel is on the proscribed list. Only the Federation—"

"Nonsense!" rapped Frisbee. "Uranium and plutonium are hard, perhaps impossible to get; true. But those, McLeod, are not the *only* radioactive minerals. Thorium—actinium—phoebium*—all these are as potent a source of atomic energy as the commonly used elements. With what do you think I have conducted my experiments, built my—"

He stopped abruptly as Dana cried: "Dad!" But I picked him up swiftly.

"Yes—your experiments? What have you built?"

Dana said: "Kerry, let's go up to the house. I'm a little tired, and it's so hot here in the sun—"

"What, Doctor?"

"Why do you want to know?" flared Dana. "I suppose so you can report it to your cold-blooded superiors on the Island? Well, we'll not tell you! It's our secret, and—"

"Dana, my dear," interposed Frisbee. "If you don't mind? Thank you. McLeod, it has not been my intention to let you in on our secret. But my careless tongue has already betrayed me. And perhaps it does no harm. Tell me—had you not guessed, in a wide sense, what we are doing here?"

"Frankly, sir, no. My information was that you had gathered a considerable amount of construction material, and a certain amount—we do not know how much—of active ores. I satisfied myself yesterday that you were not a Diarist. So I assume you have been conducting some private experiments with atomic force. Further than that—"

"Why make you waste time and words?" asked Frisbee. "The answer is quite simple. We have utilized atomic energy, McLeod, but not as a means for destruction. We use the power of the atom as a drive."

"A drive?"

"Yes. That which my followers have built here, the creation with which we had planned to escape this earth and a despotic rulership is—a space-ship!"

"Space-ship?" I cried. And I looked at Hark—

(Here again it is necessary to apologize for a break in the continuity of Kerry McLeod's narrative, as relayed via the hand of Frank Grayson. . . . There seems no day-to-day correlation between these two men's lives. According to the attested record, only four days lapsed between the conclusion of this segment and Frank Grayson's next period of hypnosis, but there appears to be an interval of one or two weeks in the world of Kerry McLeod.)

(Obviously, I cannot explain the swift conversion of the three Guardsmen to Frisbee's cause. Events of which there exists no record must have had much to do with

*This word is here faithfully reproduced from Kerry McLeod's narrative, albeit the meaning is not clear. Present day chemistry recognizes no element known as *phoebium*, but we do not know whether the word is a later era term for a mineral now known to us by another name, or whether *phoebium* is an element now "missing" from our periodic tables, and yet to be discovered by science.



"Would you rather see a world governed by religious fanatics? Madmen who worship a comet?"

such a change. However, the text provides ample evidence that a growing personal interest in Dana Frisbee may have influenced McLeod.

(As usual, the narrative resumes abruptly; the scene of the following portion is the interior of Frisbee's covertly constructed space-craft.)

—assorted instruments, the usage of which I could only surmise. The massive control panel with its banked keys and levers made that of the most complex jet-plane look simple as a child's toy. A bucket-shaped pressure seat was centrally mounted before the controls. Just above this pilot seat were six vision-plates, each about two feet square. They formed a cross shape, with four in a vertical line and the other two as wings jutting from the second panel.

"For universal vision," explained Dr. Frisbee. "We cannot get by with mere peripheral vision, as can aviators of earthbound machines. In space we must be able to spot danger coming at us from any direction."

"How do they read?" I asked.

"The vertical plates reflect the images of topside, fore, below and aft. The wings mirror starboard and port. I fear there isn't much to see just now—"

He smiled a bit ruefully. The crossbar showed only the dull gray of lapping lake waters, as did the pane at the bottom. The topmost plate shone yellow-green as the sunlight filtered through the waters above us, and schools of darting fish passed briefly before our vision and vanished. It was a striking reminder of where we were. Harkrader voiced a query for the three of us.



"Plutonium bombs," cried Frisbee. "But you can't do that!"

"But why did you build it under water, Professor?"
 "Can you think of a safer place?" demanded Frisbee. "Concealed as the *Phœnix* was, Intelligence got suspicious of me and sent Kerry here to investigate. If it had been out in the open—" He shrugged.

"A safer place, he says!" grunted Babacz. "Suppose it had sprung a leak?"

"Teofil, Teofil!" clucked our host. "A vessel that lets water *in* would also let air *out*—and that is one fault, above all others, we must not allow. Indeed, one of the main reasons for finishing the *Phœnix* under water was so we might adequately test its spaceworthiness.

"You understand, of course," he continued, "that we built the frame in the open. Then we sunk the shell, and went on with our work."

I asked: "Why is it you're showing us all this *now*, Doctor? Why didn't you let us into this section the time you first told us about the space-ship, and took us through it?"

"A fair question, simply answered, Kerry. I wasn't completely sure all or any of you could be trusted then. Now I am satisfied you are with us—"

"The way things are going, we'd be idiots not to be with you."

"This is the heart of the *Phœnix*, the nerve-center from which originate its most vital impulses. Until you were solidly allied with us, I dared not risk letting you see this chamber."

"We have said we are with you," said John Harkrader quietly. "The word of a Guardsman—even of ex-Guardsmen—can be depended on."

Frisbee nodded.

"I know that. That's why you are here today. That is why I am going to teach you things about the *Phœnix* that not even the earliest of my young followers know.

"You three men," continued Frisbee, "are our latest recruits—but you are in many ways our most valuable. Technicians, all of you—skilled professionals in your fields—you must be my aides and co-pilots in handling the *Phœnix*."

He glanced at each of us in turn.

"Well, gentlemen? World events plunge to disaster. There is little time left to us. What do you say?"

Babacz gave the simplest and most convincing reply. Touching a red-handled lever on the control panel: "This here gadget, Professor," he asked, "what is it for? And how does it work?"

IT was good for our sanity that in the ensuing days we had study with which to divert our minds from what went on in the world outside our little refuge.

As Frisbee had grimly foretold, neither the Sackies nor the Corps could be called "winners" in the atomic battles raging throughout the world. If the destruction of a stronghold, the ravaging of an entire city, could be called a "victory," there were victories for each side. But they are hollow victories wherein a salient is not *taken* but blasted out of existence, where one bomb dropped by a robot plane brings sloughing, agonizing death to a helpless civilian population ranging into the hundreds of thousands.

I will confess that my own emotions were confused. I believed in Frisbee and trusted him. Yet I was trained on the Island, and in those earliest days my strongest hope was that the International Guards Corps would put down the rebellion, restoring peace and order to a world gone mad.

I will contend, too, that the Corps adhered to its principles. It did not, as had the Diarists, strike without warning. From its remote headquarters on the Byrd Peninsula, it issued an ultimatum that key cities were to be bombed unless returned to Federation control within a specified time. These cities were fairly named, and the citizens were warned of the consequences of refusal. But they rejected the order scornfully, and at the expiration of the time limit, A-bombs fell. Chicago died in a day, victim of a disaster even more terrible than that which had razed part of it a century ago. Dublin and its half-million inhabitants disappeared in a red mushroom of nuclear forces unleashed in all their fury. So too passed the other admonished cities.

Then came retaliation, swift and terrible. On the Island fell the A-bombs of the Sackies; on cities still held by Federation forces fell others. Civilization staggered as two blind and brutal giants trampled back and forth over the face of the globe, exchanging blows in a battle of mutual destruction.

We saw New Orleans fall. The Sackies, triumphantly in possession of what had been Fedhed's master station, telecast a remote of the bombing of the Gulf city. Through electronic eyes set in the robot bombers we watched the city rise from the morning mists, saw the bomb find its target, watched the stalk of lurid smoke burgeon with its flower of flame and death. Then, even as the news commentator boasted, "*So falls another Federation fortress that defies the Brotherhood—*" a tremor shook the screen, the vision plate burned with an eye-piercing color more dazzling than white, and the image ended. Hours later we learned that the first of four A-bombs landing on Manhattan had scored a direct hit on the TV tower; the old landmark of Radio City was now a tangled mass of steel struts and powdered masonry.

My heart was with the Corps when the bombing began; it was sick for all mankind after the first few days. And it was well, as I have said, that we had study with which to divert our minds from what went on in the world outside—study and work. For there remained to us little time, Dr. Frisbee believed.

"We have been lucky so far," he claimed. "It would be foolish to expect our good fortune to last forever. We're living now on borrowed time. A guerrilla battle in this sector—chance discovery by a band of pillaging Diarists—miscalculation of a ballistics engineer thousands of miles away: any of these could lead to our instant destruction. Our only chance for survival is flight—as soon as possible."

"How soon can that be, Professor?" asked Harkrader.

"Possibly tomorrow. Surely no later than day after tomorrow. We are laying in stores and supplies now, as fast as we can. The fuel bins are filled, and the motor is primed and ready. There remains but to finish loading and to transfer my library from the house to the *Phoenix*—"

"Books too? I thought you were trying to conserve cargo space as much as possible, Professor?"

Frisbee smiled thinly.

"On nonessentials only, Kerry. A reference library may prove our saving weapon in the strange new world to which we are going. Yes, I am taking the books. Not only those on technical subjects, but fiction as well. Novels—poetry—plays—a sampling of man's efforts in the world of dreaming. Had men read more and striven less for personal gain, what we seek now to escape might never have come upon us."

I shrugged and said nothing. He was entitled to an opinion, of course. For my part, I found no need of such soporifics. Novels and plays, silly rhymes by long-haired bards of bygone days—these had no place in my life. I was bred a Guardsman. We honor facts, not fancies.

Babacz looked interested. But then, Babacz is not a cultured man, an Academy graduate like myself.

"Say, Professor—I'd like a crack at some of those books. How about letting me see to it that they're transferred safely?"

"A good idea, Teofil."

"All right. I'll get at it right away."

Babacz left. We heard him outside calling together some of the crew members to help him. He got along very well with those others, did Babacz. Better, I must admit frankly, than did Harkrader and I. It was not that they were not fine youngsters. It was just that—oh, I can't explain, exactly. But we were—or had been—Guardsmen. And Frisbee's recruits were one and all from the masses.

Still, they were needed. Frisbee had made it clear to us that this was so.

"No, they are *not* the best educated of Earth's present-day children," he admitted candidly one night when Harkrader asked about them, "but they are the soundest. They are neither wards of the Federation, schooled only in the science of military politics, nor are they products of the inept public schooling system that today teaches nothing but blind acquiescence to authority.

"These youths and maidens are my own students, hand-picked and trained by myself. On them depends the success of our venture, not only in their generation but in the years of the untold future. The *Phoenix*," he said almost harshly, "is the new Ark of mankind, built to escape the deluge of terror. From the loins of these sound children must spring a new race of freemen, bringing the best of Earth's heritage to our outpost on Venus—"

That was when first I learned our destination.

THAT night I walked again with Dana in the gardens. It was a night of no moon, but none was needed. The light of the comet was like the crimson of an August dawn, except that where the rising summer sun is clean and fresh and promising, the comet's lurid glare was sickly and foreboding. It wasn't impossible to understand the superstitious dread of those who humbled

themselves in sackcloth garments to its worship. Its awful presence, to an unlearned mob, could easily seem herald of the grisly Day of Judgment for the advent of which the Diarists had named their cult.

Still, when we walked in the garden together, it was possible to forget for a while that evil thing which had made mad the minds of men. The breezes of night were gentle, were cool, and the scents of the evening were sweet.

By the hedge where first we had learned we were fated to be more than warring strangers, Dana paused.

"It was here, Kerry. . . . Funny, isn't it? I hated you then—or thought I did. You were our enemy; you had come to spy on us. My only thought was to keep you here as long as I could, delay your report to your superiors. When you told me you must go, I could have killed you. But I had no weapon."

"You had a weapon," I told her. "Your hatred was a weapon, and your scorn. Your hair and your eyes in the moonlight. When you struck me, and I took you in my arms—"

"Must I make you defend yourself again?" she whispered. She raised her lips to mine, and there *was* no defense. There was only herself and myself, a oneness with the silence of the night.

LATER, we lay and looked up at the stars. Even the comet's baleful glow could not occult the whole star-spangled bowl which is the sky. Dana drowsily recited the strange and magic names of the ageless constellations ceaselessly burning above us.

"Scorpio, Sagittarius and Capricorn," she murmured. "Hercules and Cygnus, the Swan. They're lovely, aren't they, Kerry?"

She was lovely.

"Antares, the foe of Mars—" She pointed to a red star low on the southern horizon—"And that blue one's Vega, base of the gods' own lyre. And see? The brightest of them all, Kerry. There—"

She turned my head, and I looked for an echo of the starlight mirrored in the copper of her hair.

"Do you know what that one is, Kerry? The one that shines like a jewel? Do you know its name? That's Venus, my darling. Venus, who was the goddess of love. Could there be a better omen? We shall found our new home there."

I kissed her. There was much to be said for education of Frisbee's school, I was learning. Useless knowledge, perhaps; some of it. But rich and warm and filling.

"And those other stars?" I teased her. "Don't they have names too? Or do they move so fast they can't be given names?"

"Others? Move so fast? But the stars move slowly. You can't *watch* them move. Only shooting-stars, meteors—"

Her eyes followed the direction of my gaze. Then a gasp broke from her lips, and she leaped to her feet, tugging at my hand.

"Kerry! Kerry, those aren't stars! Those are jet-flames. Rocket planes—headed this way! *Hurry!*"

We started toward the house. But we were not alone in spotting the flight. The guard posted by Frisbee had seen it too. Even as we stumbled awkwardly over green lawns made sallow by the blood-red rays of the comet, the silence keened with the moan of our warning siren.

We had almost reached the porch when the first bomb fell. Not on us, or I should not be here to tell of it. Not even very close, thank God! But close enough so that its scream reached our ears like the far, faint cry of a wounded animal, the thunder of its blast numbed our eardrums. The very earth beneath us rose and shook; we tumbled to the ground and clung there for a breath-

less moment, wondering dimly if there would follow another, closer blow. A flaming radiance, a withering hell of heat. . . .

Then Babacz was beside us, shouting orders into our deafened ears.

"This is it! The real thing. The Corps is hitting Fedhed with an all-out attack. The Sackies are striking back with every interceptor rocket they have—and we're caught in the line of fire! We've got to get out of here—fast!"

"Out? But where? How can we—"

"The *Phoenix*. It's sooner than we had planned, but the old man says it's now or never. That's our only chance."

We hit the ramp on the run. The tube was a riot of confusion: Crewmen and workers of our little band scurrying, luggage-laden, to their assigned quarters aboard the *Phoenix*. Others elbowing their way back outside to pick up material as yet unshipped, being turned back at the entrance by Dr. Frisbee, who stood there urging, shoving, bawling: "No more! Get to your assigned stations! No time for another load!"

His face was tense and strained; some of its tenseness lifted as his eyes found us.

"Dana—thank God! And Kerry! I didn't know where you were. The others reported you missing."

"We're all right. Harkrader's aboard?"

"In the control turret. Join him there. I'll come as soon as the last one is in."

We hurried topside. Harkrader's creased face broke into a smile of relief at our appearance.

"Better strap down. The motor is warming. We take off as soon as Frisbee gets here."

I helped Dana into a percussion seat, saw to it she was securely buckled for the blastaway, then harnessed myself into another of the chairs. I had just finished, when a clang of metal signaled the closing of the last port. The thunder of bombing stopped suddenly. Until that moment I hadn't been aware of its incessant din. But now there was an almost ominous stillness, punctuated only by the thin sighing of the air-replenishment system.

I caught myself thinking with a curious detachment: "This is impossible! This can't be happening to me. It is a dream, a nightmare. I will wake in a moment—"

THEN Frisbee was with us, was moving swiftly to the pilot's seat. As he buckled himself into the pressure chair, his eyes offered each of us a brief message of courage and of hope. He said no word. There was no word to say. All of us knew what he was thinking. To stay was certain death—but a death we could understand in a world we knew. To go was—what?

We did not know. But the time had passed for fearing the unknown terrors of a stranger world. It was too late to turn back.

Frisbee touched the stud. There was no sound. But a massive hand seemed to reach forth and hit my chest—crushing the breath from my lungs. The blood burned in my brain, blotted my sight. The darkness—

(Here the Grayson-McLeod manuscript provides its own natural sub-climax which, with the grateful acumen of a long-time fiction writer, I utilize as a chapter break.

(From this point on, the narrative becomes progressively more sketchy, more skimpy of details, and more episodic until its baffling and far-from-conclusive ending. I deplore this fact, but can do nothing about it. As a mere medium for its publication—so to speak,—I do not feel I have the right to make other than those few changes of continuity and phrase permitted me by Dr. Westcott.

(The reader, therefore, must form his own determinations—as I have done for myself—as to the periods of

time elapsed, the locales of the scenes so inadequately portrayed, and, above all, as to the meanings of these fragments.)

CHAPTER FIVE

W



ATER. But I thought it would hold out until we reached our destination, now only a week distant if Frisbee's calculations were correct. There was no food problem. Fresh and tinned goods alike had been shipped in quantity. We were not eating much, anyway. Everyone aboard was queasy with the vague disorder that also troubled me, an indefinable squeamishness that made us all half drowsy and irritable, a fever for which there was no medicine, because it was caused by no germ. Just a dry, parched fretfulness like that you feel after lying too long on a beach.

It was hard to believe we had been over four months in space. Looking back on it now, the wonder of those first excitement-filled days seems callow. Hard to realize that we once had gaped, open-mouthed and wide-eyed, at every new sight that offered.

Now we were acceptant of the fact that the space we voyaged through was deepest jet, not the sunswept radiance we had thought in our ignorance it would be. Now we marveled no longer at the glory of the firm, untwinkling stars as seen in airless space, unblanketed by a stifling layer of atmosphere. We chilled no longer with terror when a flaming bullet as big as an earthly mountain loomed in our vision plates, boding to sweep us into oblivion in its furious headlong chase. We had learned that in the vast emptiness of the gulf that stretches between the worlds they are near neighbors that pass within a score of thousands of miles, and that the meteor so "closely" threatening us might be a full day's journey distant.

All this is not romantic. But it is true. I was a Guardsman; I was trained to observe and report the facts. Let the poets and the dreamers sing of the wonder of space-flight. I say simply and truthfully that the trip was uneventful. It was dull. There were no hours of day and night to dispel the monotony; our ports looked out on a star-bright but everlasting night, in which even the sun was but another burning star. One greater, brighter than most, it is true, but still a half the size it looks through earth's refracting mantle.

We did what any group would do that must live under a single roof, within entrapping walls, for more than a hundred days. We worked; we studied; we played. We slept. When we were hungry, we ate. We talked of what lay before us, and less often, of what lay behind. We learned to know our shipmates as we had known few men and women in our lives. We became friends with some; we did not permit ourselves to become enemies with any. In the civilization we must create, hatred must be a word unknown.

And—since we were young and warm and alive—love rode the *Phoenix* with us. A boy and a girl, hands locked together, would come to Frisbee asking permission to marry. It was granted always. For as Frisbee said to me after one such ceremony, with a smile filled with understanding: "I will not argue the propriety of these marriages, on either a religious or a civil basis. But we have a new world to people, and one theological precept we must never forget: 'Be fruitful.' If mankind is to endure, we must be fruitful and multiply."

It seemed as good a time as any to tell him of Dana and myself. He heard me with pleasure and with no great surprise.

"I am glad, Kerry. I deeply and heartily approve." He laid his hand on my shoulder. "It is best and fitting you should become my son, Kerry, as Dana is my

daughter. For one day you must lead this little band. I am an old man. I will not always be here to guide, encourage and instruct. You are best suited to the leadership I must one day relinquish.

"So—my blessing on you both. But—" He beamed. "But we must have a celebration. A *real* one! I'll prepare a special banquet, with music and dancing and—"

I stood there stunned. Babacz rushed to the radio cabinet, frantically twisted dials. Uselessly. Where should have been voices was only the dry crackling of static. Where had been music was silence. Our last, thin-drawn contact with Earth was gone.

My wife turned, and with a half-sob buried her head in my shoulder. I touched those dear bronze locks with hands that shook, and spoke to Frisbee through uncertain lips.

"It—it could be a technical fault, Professor? We are more than thirty million miles from Earth. Even Hertzian transmission *can* go wrong—"

He shook his head slowly, gravely.

"No, Kerry. Those last cries you heard, those last labored gasps, were the swan-song of mankind on Earth. There will be no more messages from our native planet. Never. Not ever—in our lifetime."

Harkrader said: "You speak with terrible assurance, Dr. Frisbee. As if you had *known* this would happen."

"I did," said Frisbee sadly. "Forgive me. Forgive me, all my friends, if you can. But I *did* know it would happen. I learned the dreadful truth more than three years ago. That was when—and why—I gathered about me the children of this colony, and started building the *Phaenix*."

"I *knew* the comet would brush Earth this time. For a while I feared it would strike our old world head-on. Then I found the saving error in my calculations, learned that the head would graze and the tail rake the planet.

"So it was not to be utter destruction. But it was bad enough. Once before, many thousands of years ago, a wayward comet grazed a civilized Earth. That civilization died; it took thousands of decades to regain it."

"I read about that," said Babacz. "In one of those books we brought along. A writer named Bond, I think. But I thought it was only fiction. He wrote a lot of that stuff—most of it kind of crazy. I haven't read all of it—"

"All fantasy is not sheer dreaming. Much is truth; much more is simple logic. All men knew Halley's Comet was a potential source of danger. Or *should* have known if they had stopped to think. It *almost* brushed Earth on its last visit, in 1910. Then there were riots too, outbursts of religious fanaticism, terror and awe. But to a lesser extent. To that extent which was a measure of the danger. Instincts are more sound than most men know. The very scope and violence of the Diarist movement was an indication that their fears were well grounded. They cried the day of judgment—and that judgment came."

"If I had known," mourned Harkrader. "Frisbee—if I had only known!"

"That is why I asked you to forgive me, John," said our leader. "I knew, but I told none of you. Not even Dana, my own daughter. For I knew what your reaction would be. As men of Earth, you did not greatly fear leaving your homeland—not so long as you knew it was there to come back to! But if you had dreamed that you were making a one-way voyage, a trip from which there was no return, you would not have come. You would have chosen to stay and suffer the fate of your fellow-humans."

"Shall I tell the colony, Professor?" asked Warren. As a proven leader, he had taken his place in our council. A fine chap. His ingenious handling of that snake-



We wondered dimly if there would follow a closer blow.

vine problem had made the building of New Eden possible.

"I think it would be better not to, Dick. They are happy here; they are even happier in their conviction that we will one day return to earth. Let us not disturb that happiness."

"Dad," said Dana suddenly, "awhile ago you said—'in our lifetime.' Do you mean by that the comet *hasn't* killed all life on Earth?"

"Exactly that, my dear. Many—perhaps millions—must have died in the first dreadful hours. The burning heat as the comet neared—the tidal waves and earthquakes—riots and panic—you heard about these before the messages ended."

"But man is a resourceful creature. And in Earth's bowels are many refuges—mines, caverns, grottoes; even such man-made havens as deep-sea submarines and diving-bells."

"In all of these, human life will persist. Also in remote corners of the globe untouched by the comet's scourge. Lapland or Antarctica, Baffin's Bay or Siberia—we do not know which face of the earth took the brunt of the blow, and which was spared."

"Then," I cried excitedly, "life *will* go on. And I think you are wrong, Professor. We can't stay here now. Our duty to our world, our people, demands that we go back and do what we can to help them. We can repair the *Phaenix*. It was not altogether ruined when we crashed. In a month or two—"

Frisbee shook his head sadly.

"No, Kerry. I still haven't told you all. There's one thing more my observations of the comet revealed—its chemical nature—the elements that combine to form its gaseous envelope."

Harkrader said tremulously: "You mean—poisonous?"

"Not *quite* that. But the next worse thing. Unless my analysis is wholly in error—and from the dwindling

gasps which were the last thing we heard from Earth I believe it is not—the gaseous composition of the comet was anesthetic.

"I think," concluded Dr. Frisbee sorrowfully, "that on Earth our brothers sleep. Those who did not die rest in a drugged slumber that may last as long as a taint of the comet mingles with the air of our native planet."

"Which may be—" I cried.

"Decades, Kerry."

"But then they'll all die! If they sleep and can't feed themselves—"

"I think not. There is a rather obscure gas in the comet's spectrum. Its peculiar property is that—"

I WALKED to the door and looked out. The towering weedlike trees of Venus, tops mantled in the eternal mists of cloud, rose like a green wall about that tiny cleared area we had so hopefully named New Eden.

For the first time since our crash-landing, I felt a dreadful loneliness, a helplessness, an insecurity and fear I had not known since that boyhood day when I had been selected as the cadet from my district and sent to the Island to train as a Guardsman.

Somewhere beyond those clouds, invisible to us forevermore, in heavens we never glimpsed, must twinkle a bright, green, glowing orb—the Earth to which we could never in our lifetime return. For there men slept. . . .

Warren touched my arm. He spoke softly.

"He wants to see you, Kerry."

I nodded and went back to his room. Dana was still there. She had been crying soundlessly. She read the question in my eyes and shook her head. I moved to Frisbee's side, touched gently the one hand unwashed in bandages. His eyes opened slowly, recognized me.

"Kerry. Kerry, my son—"

"It's all right, Chief," I said. "You mustn't talk now. You must be quiet and try to rest."

His words came muffled from beneath the gauze which encased his lips.

"There is no time for that now. The long rest lies before me, Kerry. Now I must know—"

He faltered, and I prompted him.

"Yes, Chief? What do you want to know?"

"The lodge. Was it completely destroyed?"

"I'm afraid so. But we'll rebuild it. Already the men are clearing ground for a bigger and better one."

"And the ship? The *Phoenix*? Did the fire ruin it too?"

"It's—pretty bad." I could not tell him how bad. I could not bring myself to tell him how the explosion of the auxiliary motor had seared and twisted the ship into a huddle of molten and fused parts.

"The supplies? The lab equipment? The seeds?"

"All saved, sir—thanks to you. We owe you a debt we can never repay."

I think he tried to smile. His eyes smiled until a grimace of pain closed them briefly.

"It was my dream," he said. "My colony. I want no payment. I have been repaid a thousand times over, seeing it grow and prosper. *For here—*" he said; and I felt, somehow, that he was quoting an old, loved passage: "*For here shall I hew a paradise out of the virgin wild, and I shall people it. And it shall be called the new Eden—*"

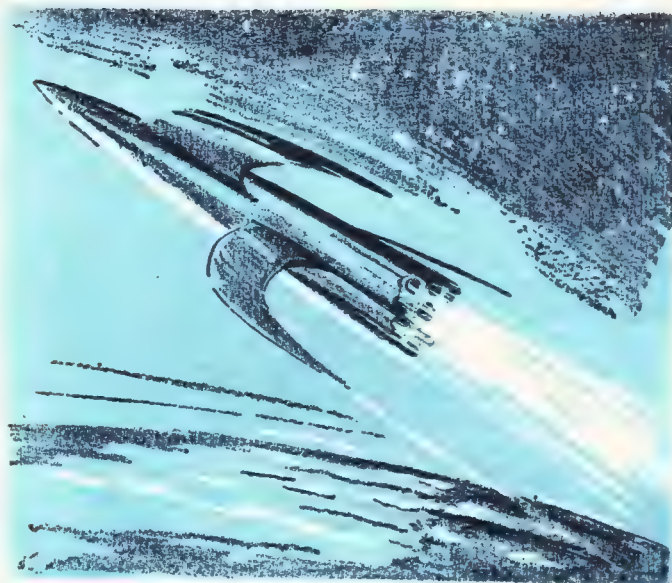
"Father," said Dana, "you must not talk any longer. You must rest and get back your strength."

He did not seem to hear her words. Once again, his eyes were seeking mine.

"A new Eden," he whispered. "A new chance for man, here on man's final outpost. Kerry? Kerry, my son—"

"Yes, Chief?"

"There is one thing that troubles me: I have never mentioned it before. But now I must. The—children?"



The time had passed for fearing the unknown terrors of a stranger world. It was too late to turn back.

There have been no children. We have been here almost half a year, but still there have been no children."

I glanced at Dana, and she at me. There was sorrow in her eyes, and a sort of terror. But when she answered, her voice was strong and clear.

"Father—there will be children. Kerry and I—we have known—we wanted to surprise you. And others—some of the others too—"

Frisbee's voice was glad.

"Thank God! I was afraid it was the hard radiation aboard the *Phoenix*. Even in laboratories on Earth, sterility came from gamma rays. I feared the rays of space. All of us were sick, you remember. But I suppose it was only temporary."

"We'll have a big feast," I said with forced cheerfulness. "When the first child is born, we'll all—"

"That was to be my next project," he continued. "I think there is an answer to gene injury caused by gamma rays. Once, in a series of experiments, I stumbled across a curious reaction. I found that pure vitamin A seems to stimulate the damaged regenerative cells. Not vitamin E, as might logically be expected, but the anti-xerophthalmiac vitamin A. I had intended to synthesize this vitamin, try injections—"

His voice was getting weaker by the moment.

"But there will be no need of that now. There will be children. The race of man will go on. I am content." He reached out feebly, in turn touching each of our hands. "Now I will rest," he whispered. "God bless and protect you all."

He closed his eyes. He did not open them again. I think, though, that his final rest was a happy one.

WHEN we had drawn the blinds and left the room, our need for acting ended. In my arms, Dana gave way to tears at last.

"Kerry, I lied to him. I lied to my father—and I never did that before. But I had to, didn't I?"

I soothed her as best I could.

"You did the only thing," I reassured her. "He was happy at the end, believing your lie. Why should he know"—I could not keep the bitterness from my voice—"his fear was based on truth? That there are no children—will not be any children—cannot be any children in our hopeless and sterile Eden?"

"But Kerry—the hint he gave you? The vitamin A. Can't we try that? Can't we—"

"Do you," I asked her almost harshly, "remember the formula for vitamin A?"

"Well, no, but—"

"And have you forgotten," I cried, "that our entire reference library was destroyed in the fire that cost *him* his life?"

"No, Dana, it's no use. The race of man has turned its last milepost. Earth sleeps—and we of its last outpost are doomed to a slow but certain oblivion."

She turned away then. . . .

"I don't say there *is*, but there *could be*," Babacz said, and he looked a little sheepish.

"I know I wasn't supposed to take any from the library. But I did. Like I told you, I got kind of interested, especially in those science-fiction stories. I guess Frisbee must have been, too. He had scads of 'em. And I'd transferred a lot of them, maybe half of them, to my own quarters before the explosion. I'm sorry if I did wrong, Kerry. I meant no harm. And when I heard what you just said—"

"Wrong!" I cried. "Babacz, you *may* have committed the finest crime in the history of the human race! Let's see those precious books that you have! There's a bare chance—"

They were for the most part utterly meaningless—lurid, fanciful, melodramatic tales of adventure on planets of our system, and even on worlds many light-years away. Some are utterly ridiculous, like one that portrayed Venus as being a jungle world peopled by weird, intelligent spiderlike creatures. He was a fool who wrote that story.

For here we have found nothing so incredible as the life forms he invented. Only the echo-plants and the landfish are in any way foreign to our experience. I do not believe that, as Warren and a few of the others claim, the nightwalkers have intelligence. No vegetable *thinks*, and I am sure their supposed "whispering" is just the rustling of the wind through their curiously headlike seed-pods. Despite which, we must have that south gate repaired. I do not think we should risk another accident like that which happened last week. It upsets the colony. Klein *swears* they attacked him. . . .

But I was talking about the books. It is true that most of them are completely useless. They are silly romances in a frame of pseudo-science. But there are others which are more carefully conceived and written; stories which are based on a clear and definite scientific fact. One of these could, just barely and possibly *could*, contain the clue we need.

Those writers, after all, had access to many books—to facts lost to us when our reference library was destroyed. If one of them—just *one* of them—had been inspired to base a fiction tale on vitamins, and in that story had written the all-important structural formula for vitamin A.

DANA put her cheek against mine.

"You've got to come to bed, Kerry. You're tired; I *know* you're tired."

Reluctantly I closed the book, tossed it with those many, many others I had plowed through in vain. The shelf of useless books was growing ever longer; the group in which lay our last hope was becoming smaller, mad-deningly smaller. All but a few of the bound books I had read. There remained some bundles of old magazines. Really *old* ones, I mean. Some of them were thirty or forty years out of print. The Professor had been quite a collector of that sort of thing. On Earth, in a happier day, his accumulation would have been prized by a museum.

"No luck, I suppose?" asked Dana.

I shook my head. "None."

"Don't you think they *knew*?" she asked. "They are so old, those books. Perhaps in those early days—"

"Oh, they *knew*!" I replied savagely. "I've read a hundred references to vitamins. But never a notation of the actual formula. You see, that knowledge was commonplace to them. Why should they make special mention of details available in any standard book of reference?"

"How could they guess," I went on, "how terribly and desperately we would need that simple fact? We have the raw elements here; we have the lab equipment. We can synthesize *anything*—but we don't know where to begin in creating that one thing that can save our colony."

"The knowledge is lost. And *we* are lost unless an answer lies somewhere in these last few—"

(*Here, as abruptly as it began, concludes the manuscript of Kerry McLeod.*)

MY own possibly weakling response to this manuscript, and to the demand of Dr. Arthur Westcott, I find hard to explain.

Let me say immediately and frankly that I *fear* I am the victim of either an awesomely elaborate practical joke, or the auctorial ambitions of a man now known only as a doctor.

I do not believe this narrative to be true. I cannot accept or endorse its facts, its theories, its completely implausible prophecy as to mankind's future history and fate. These things are too fantastic. And yet. . . .

And yet a reading of my encyclopedia tells me Halley's Comet will revisit Earth in 1985. It tells me also that this baleful body's last visitation did foment religious hysteria, rioting and furor and, some think, the horrors of the first World War that followed closely after.

I remind myself that Grayson is an inmate of a hospital for the mentally deranged, and with this as reassurance, it seems relatively meaningless that his own script should be so different from that of Kerry McLeod.

Yet it is true that even as I write, foresighted men of good will throughout this squabbling world are arguing for a worldwide union of nations—a federation to be implemented by an armed international police corps. Is it absurd to fear that such an organization could rise and assume the powers of world government? I think not. . . .

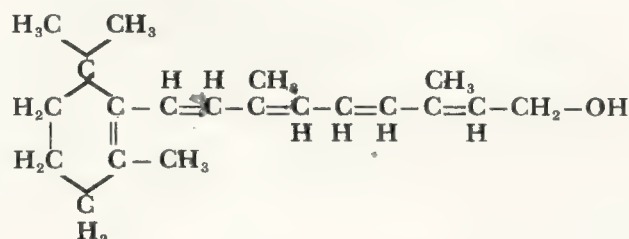
Still, I do not believe in this manuscript. But on one point I do agree with Dr. Westcott: That I dare not take a chance on the fallibility of my own judgment.

"You dare not refuse," he had told me. "*For on its telling may depend the fate of all mankind.*"

The last of all weird coincidences, my name appears in this narrative. That is flattery of a dubious nature, but it is the fact that forces upon me the obligation of presenting the tale under my by-line. Because there is a slim chance that somehow this story may be true, because there is a faint hope the magazine in which the story is printed may lie still unread in that dwindling pile through which McLeod so desperately searches, I must do what I can.

Therefore, though I suspect that in so doing I make a final and utter fool of myself, I offer here that clue, the formula which may mean life or death to Earth's last outpost.

Here, Kerry McLeod, is the structural chemical formula for synthesizing vitamin A:



Be fruitful, sons of Earth, and multiply. . . .



Murder *in the* Sudd

THE notice-board on the river steamer carried the usual announcements about passports and baggage, and it also had another which might have warned me that the twelve-day journey ahead was likely to be unusual. This ran: "SHOOTING FROM THE SHIP IS NOT ALLOWED EXCEPT AT CROCODILES: PASSENGERS ARE REQUESTED TO REFRAIN FROM THIS BETWEEN THE HOURS OF 2 AND 4."

It was six in the morning, and a brilliant sun was rising in a burnished sky when I read this notice. The place was Kosti, where the river steamer starts for Juba on the Equatorial Nile. I was the first on board. Passengers normally arrive by the night train from Khartoum, but I had got a lift by car the previous day and spent the night there. This gave me the opportunity to explore my surroundings at leisure. First, I had gone to my cabin and appropriated the better placed of the two berths: they were real beds, I was glad to note, and the fans were well sited and in good working order. Second, I had with some surprise regarded the odd collection of satellites which were clustered round the main paddle-steamer: Large lighters with second-class cabins were lashed on either side, and three more were tied on in front:

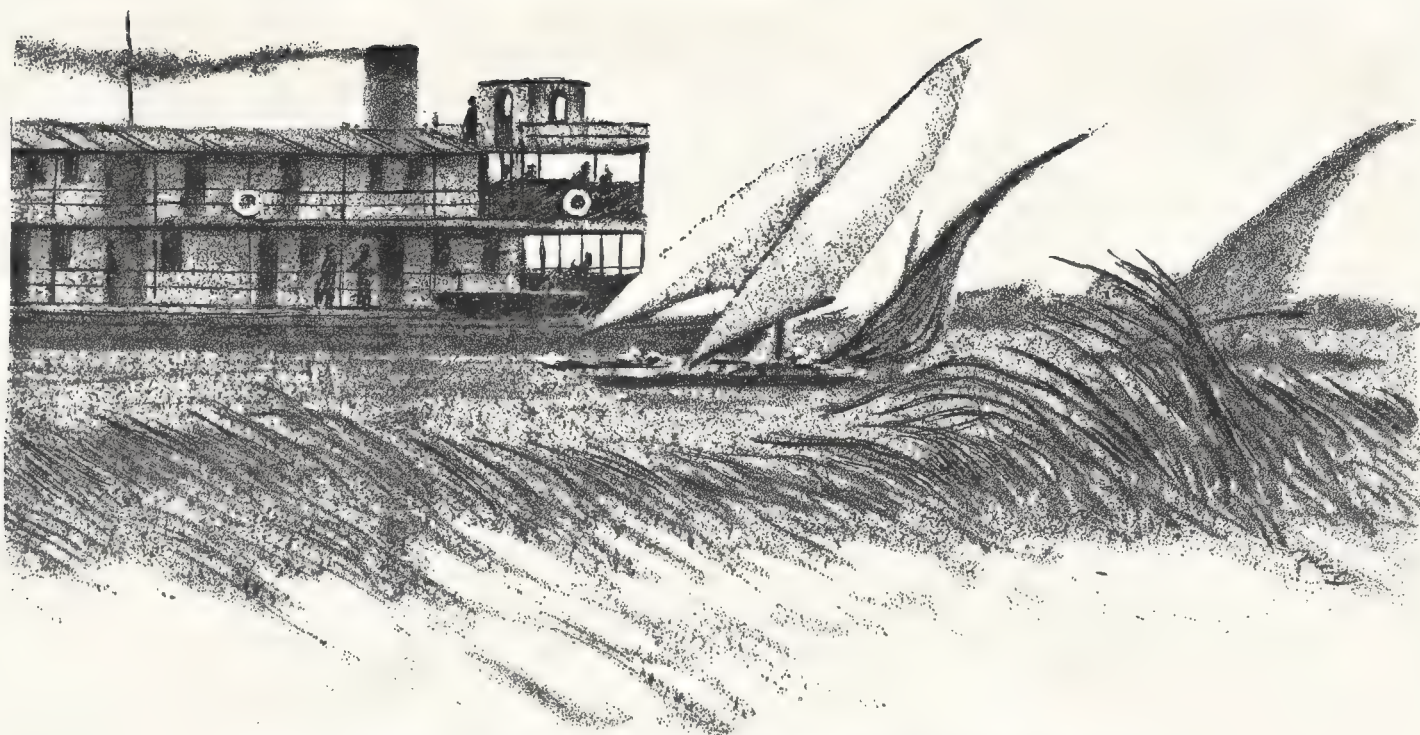
apparently the whole collection was going to be pushed up the river. Strange breakfasts were already being cooked on the for'ard lighters, and from the smells and sounds, I gathered that this was the third-class accommodation. Finally, having read the notice about the crocodiles, I leaned over the rail, thinking of the cold drizzle I had left in England only four days before (for I had flown to Khartoum), and watching the train, which had just arrived, disgorge its passengers on the dusty quay.

There was much argument as tall Sudanese porters disputed over the baggage. But at last a move was made, and I leaned farther over the side, trying to pick out my cabin companion. First came a group of six, three men and three women, all rather squat of figure, competently dressed in khaki, with bright, earnest, shiny faces. These I put down as missionaries; and as it turned out, this was correct. Behind them came two couples, yattering in French, each with three beady-eyed children all apparently of the same age. These I guessed to be Belgians on their way to the Congo, and again this turned out to be correct.

After these two groups there was a pause and more heated argument between the porters. Then came two

darkish gentlemen, one very stout and one very thin, each wearing a tarboosh; and behind them a man and his wife, again in khaki, who had an official look about them. . . . Once more a pause. Then in the most beautifully fitting trousers and shirt came a very attractive young woman, who from her bearing might have been stepping into the Ritz somewhere instead of onto this strange collection of river-craft. Behind her came an escort of no less than three Europeans, all carrying items of her baggage. And behind them, lean and aloof, came yet another very good-looking man, carrying nothing.

There was still a number of passengers after this, but I was no longer taking any interest in them. I was watching the young woman crossing the gangway, and I suddenly had the feeling that I had met her before somewhere. I have had this feeling on other occasions about beautiful women, and later been convinced, sometimes by the women themselves, that I was mistaken. But this time I was not entirely in error. She passed within a foot of me on her way to her cabin, and I recognized her at once. It was Queen Nefertiti herself! The backward slant of the arrogant head and the upward slant of the almond eyes: it was all there and unmistakable.



A STRANGE COMPANY ABOARD THAT STEAMER GOING UP THE NILE—MOSTLY BRITISH RISKING A HAZARD OF NEW FORTUNES IN POST-WAR AFRICA. THEN A SHOT WAS FIRED, AND THE AMERICAN DISAPPEARED. . . .

A Novelette by LAURENCE KIRK

And this time there was not only the head and shoulders to engage the eye; the rest of her was equally compelling, and I looked rather sourly at the three men who had obviously got a good start on me by their attentions to her in the train.

THE journey from Kosti to Juba can be recommended to all those who are fond of warmth, leisure, good food and really monotonous scenery. The desert which has stretched all the way from Cairo comes to an end at Kosti, and gives way to an unconvincing and sparse greenness in a completely flat and circular world. There are a few trees at intervals; but never a hill, not even a mound. In this flat world the vast interminable blue river flows on just as if it had been squeezed out of some gigantic tube and laid flat on the countryside. Sometimes there is a dugout canoe with its black paddler close in to the bank; and sometimes in a clearing there are other black figures, completely nude, and perhaps a couple of round thatched huts. Of cultivation there is practically none.

Gray herons pass lazily in the air, and a black-and-white fish eagle is sitting on a dead branch every half-mile. It might be the same eagle on the same branch. Crocodiles slip stealthily off

the grassy bank or lie like logs in the water; and rarely a hippo, with its cocked ridiculous ears, gazes like some dowager at the commotion coming, then sinks slowly under the water, just as if it had forgotten to lock the bathroom door. And after four days, and two calls at larger villages, the monotony increases. For the next five days after that one is in the Sudd, uninhabited and uninhabitable: a vast swamp, in which the channel twists alternately from east to west, and almost loses itself. Near or far, there is nothing to see except papyrus and papyrus.

That is how the journey up the Nile would appear without Nefertiti on board. With Nefertiti on board, it was as exciting in the year 1946 as it would have been four thousand years earlier. Her name was Hélène Valdaris, and she scoffed at the idea of her being a reincarnation of anyone else. For one thing, she was a Greek, and not an Egyptian; and that settled the matter in so far as she was concerned. It did not, however, settle it for the young Dutchman with the big nose who at that time was the most successful of her admirers. He said at once that she must be a reincarnation of Helen of Troy. That no doubt would have gone down well enough with a stupider woman. But Hélène

knew the genuine from the spurious, and always counted her change. If that were so, she replied somewhat coldly, why did he insist that she was like Nefertiti? She then left the Dutchman to think that over, and turned her charms on the Norwegian and the Czech who were the other two of the three admirers.

These three admirers all had unpronounceable names which I could not grasp; and I always thought of them as the Dutchman, the Norwegian and the Czech. They were all ordinary-looking young men of about thirty. The Dutchman had a humorous face besides the big nose, the Norwegian had round baby features and blond hair, while the Czech was dark and saturnine. I thought that I was at least as attractive as any of them, but they had got an unfair start by traveling with Hélène on the train; and they not only shared a table for four in the dining-room, but were always clustered round her chair on the shady side of the deck.

The fourth potential rival was the very handsome man, who had not helped to carry Hélène's luggage on board; and he, as it happened, was my cabin companion. He was an American, it appeared, John Vincent Bland by name—which made it all the more odd that he should show so little



had already decided one thing: I had intended to go on to Rhodesia myself, but that night it occurred to me that there were probably better opportunities either in Kenya or the Congo Belge—especially as none of the other three suitors proposed to stay in either of those two places.

IT was Hélène who was really responsible for the crocodile shooting. There were no crocodiles to be seen the first day. The second there were a few; and after observing the siesta as requested on the notice, my cabin companion got out a rifle and took up a position at the aft end of the upper deck. There he was clear of the side barges, which were shorter than the main steamer, and he sat reading a book in a deck-chair with the rifle beside him. He must have been allergic to crocodiles, for he always looked up at the right moment; and when he fired, he never missed. And he was back reading his book long before the crocodile had stopped lashing the water in its death pangs.

Hélène's normal place was in the middle of the top deck, and that of course was the position of her admirers as well. It was on the third morning, when John Vincent Bland had already bagged his second crocodile for the day, that Hélène suggested pleasantly that perhaps we would like to do some shooting too, instead of wasting our time talking to her. When we demurred at that, she added that perhaps we were afraid of having our shooting compared with that of the lean silent stranger.

Something of course had to be done about it after that. It transpired then that the only other rifle on board belonged to the Czech. We thought it an excellent idea that the Czech should compete with the American: that would mean one less of us buzzing round Hélène. But the Czech did not see it that way. Either we all went shooting, or none of us did. So finally we had a talk with the American, who seemed delighted to join in, and arranged a competition. The two rifles were to be pooled, and the five of us would draw lots for them every morning. One kept the rifle and had another shot when one bagged a crocodile, but handed it over to the next man when one missed.

The result of this arrangement was anything but flattering to the four of us. When John Vincent Bland got one of the rifles in his turn, he retained it for the rest of the day, while the rest of us kept handing the other over with expressions of increasing chagrin. Hélène calmly went on with some fine needlework while we were thus engaged, and our relations both with the American and with each other began to get strained. However much we tried to keep up appearances,

He must have been allergic to crocodiles, for he always looked up at the right moment; and when he fired, he never missed.

interest in such a very pretty woman. Not that he had bad manners at all. He had very charming manners; but although he could only have been about thirty-five, he behaved to Hélène as though he were old enough to be her father. I thought I sometimes saw a look in her eye which suggested that she wished he would remember his real age. But that may have been my imagination. In any case, he remained courteous and aloof, and incidentally was the ideal person with whom to share a cabin. He never seemed to be in it at all.

It was the shortage of sea-shipping that made us all travel this unusual route; and with such a cosmopolitan crowd on board, it might be expected that they would be inclined to talk about their recent war experiences.

But none of them did. Their eyes were all fixed on the future, and they did not want to hear about the past. Europe had been a dream which began well and ended badly; and they all hoped to find new lives in some part of Africa. This applied to Hélène as well as to the rest of them. I did manage to get her to myself for a moment the second evening as we were leaning on the rail looking at the sunset. She had been in Athens all through the war, she told me, and did not want to talk about what had happened there. She was going to Nairobi, where she had an uncle in business. She would either settle in Kenya, or go on to the Congo Belge, where she had a married sister.

As she did not want to talk about the past, I did not press her. But I

there was no denying what we all felt in our hearts. Hélène was what we wanted. And if we had only known a good way of doing it, we would have gladly bumped off the American for lowering us in her eyes, and each other for being continually in the way.

I HAVE already said that the Sudd was reached on the fifth day from Kosti. We had settled down into a kind of routine by then. The morning shoot went on from eleven to twelve-thirty, the evening from four-thirty to six; and the siege of Hélène all the time. After six it was customary to walk the decks looking at the sunset, which was as rapid as it was lovely. Then about six-thirty when it was dusk, the upper deck became deserted, and everyone retired to the cabin deck, either to wash and change, or to have an early sundowner in the wired-in veranda for ard. No one lingered outside the netting after that hour. A dose of malaria on the trip would have been very inconvenient. . . .

It had been a sultry afternoon. In the morning we had some pleasant scenery with grassy creeks on either side, and blue lagoons so numerous that one could not guess which was the right channel. But that had soon passed, and in the afternoon the Sudd closed round us. It had a stifling, imprisoning effect; and the afternoon's shoot had been unusually acrimonious. Crocodiles were becoming scarce, for one thing; and when one did appear and the Dutchman missed, he accused the Czech of joggling his arm. They did not say much; but murderous glances passed between them, and the tension was in no way lessened when we saw Hélène down the deck raise her eyes from her fine needlework and smile, or when John Vincent Bland languidly lifted his rifle a moment later and killed another crocodile stone dead.

I was glad after this to be alone in my cabin. I had a tacit agreement with my companion to change early while he changed late, and I knew I would have at least half an hour before he came in. I spent that half-hour deciding to retire from the shooting contest, and also to try a little indifference on Hélène, since attention produced such poor results. I had already bathed; and it was while I was putting on my socks that I heard a shot. No doubt I would have paid more attention if I had not been frequently hearing shots for the last three days. As it was, I merely looked at my watch (which stated the time as six-forty) and finished my dressing, wondering quite unconcernedly whether the Dutchman was having some practice on another crocodile, or whether he had shot the Czech.

I was having a drink on the veranda, with the missionaries sipping lemon-

ade beside me, and the Belgian children crawling over their parents, when the Englishman whom I had guessed to be an official came to me.

"I don't want to be a spoil-sport," he began, "but this continual shooting is becoming rather a bore. In fact, it's getting on my wife's nerves."

I sympathized with him, said that I was getting rather tired of it myself, and offered him a drink to appease him. I had learned by now that he was Postmaster-General somewhere, an M.B.E., and liked to be regarded as a person of importance.

"I know you never shoot between two and four," he went on somewhat more genially, "and generally stop about six. But this evening there was a shot at six-forty. It must have been far too dark to see anything properly at that time. What's more important, my wife was having a bath then. The shot was quite close—almost in the bathroom, she says. It scared her out of her wits."

The arrival of the waiter at this moment with his whisky and soda gave me an opportunity to recall my own memories of the shot. My cabin was halfway down on the starboard side. The shot had certainly come from aft of that, and I had assumed it came from the upper deck, where we always did our shooting. But that did not tally with what he had just told me. The bathrooms were below on the cabin deck, two for men starboard, and two for ladies port. In between there was a passageway leading to the lavatories, which were almost over the paddle, and again were separated: men starboard, ladies port. For a shot to sound as close as he said, it must have come from one of the other bathrooms or else the lavatories; and that seemed to exclude the possibility of a crocodile as the target.

"Do you think the shot was really as close as your wife says?" I asked at length.

"My wife suffers from nerves," he answered distantly, "but she is an





"This evening there was a shot at 6:40. My wife was having a bath then. The shot was close. It scared her out of her wits."

extremely accurate woman. I am sure that it all happened exactly as she said."

"Then it could hardly have been anyone shooting at a crocodile," I persisted.

"It would certainly be improbable at that hour," he agreed.

"Very well, then," I ended, "if it wasn't somebody shooting at a crocodile, what was somebody shooting at?"

For answer, he just blinked at me and drank his whisky rather quickly.

THE musical instrument which served as a gong announced dinner at this moment, and I got up knowing that the answer to the question in my mind was likely to be supplied one way or another very shortly. The Postmaster-General remained where he was, waiting for his wife; but the Belgians and the missionaries also got up and crowded into the dining-room. They clearly were expectant of nothing except a good meal; but then they

were all accommodated for'ard on the side barges, and probably had not heard any shot.

Except for these two groups, I was the first in the dining-room. I shared a table with the chief engineer, a Scot, (who was the only European on the staff of the steamer, and in sole charge) and the two gentlemen in tarbooshes, who seemed to speak every language under the sun except English. The latter sat with their backs to the room, while the Chief Engineer sat beside me facing it. I can only describe him as a very weary man. I think I would have been weary too, if I had had to spend my life going through the Sudd three times a month, listening to the passengers admiring the scenery, of which I was sick to death, or alternately retailing trivial complaints about the service or each other's behavior. And I would have been particularly weary that evening; for I would have known that if anything unfortunate had happened on the

steamer, I was the man who would have to clear up the mess.

Anyway, the Chief Engineer was the first person to come in, and he looked wearier than ever. He forgot even to say good evening, glanced nervously round the room, and sat down, staring at his plate. He obviously had heard the shot, and was extremely worried about it. He was followed thirty seconds later by the two tarbooshes. They sat down as usual; but immediately turned round, as though to see who was there and who was missing, then glanced at each other and remained silent. Obviously they too had heard a shot.

There was a pause after that, and the waiters started serving the iced consommé. Then the Czech came in and sat down, drumming with his fingers on the table. After that, in ones and twos, came three or four passengers I had never spoken to, then the Postmaster-General and his wife; and they all looked round the room in that curious way, as though to see who was there and who was missing. Again there was a long pause; then from opposite ends, one from the veranda and one from the main door, came the Dutchman and the Norwegian. They both stopped dead when they saw each other, almost as if they had seen a ghost. Then they suddenly came to life and sat down at their table without exchanging a word.

THERE were now only two places vacant: Hélène and John Vincent Bland. The two tarbooshes looked round again, nodded to each other and went on with their soup. The Chief Engineer pushed his away as though it were choking him, and I remained with my eyes glued on the three men at Hélène's table. If anyone had done anything to her, I thought savagely, I'd deal with him myself! And they, it seemed, were thinking, the same thing. They were all taut and intense in their different ways, and suddenly the Dutchman stood up abruptly, as though he were going to leave the dining-room. But at that exact moment Hélène came in, beautifully dressed, quite unconcerned, walking on air as she always did. I could almost hear the Dutchman's sigh of relief as he sat down. I could certainly see the smile which spread slowly over his face.

The only chair vacant now was that of John Vincent Bland; and it remained vacant. The conversation, which had burst out afresh when Hélène came into the room, soon lagged and gradually petered into silence. Even the waiters stopped moving about and gazed instead at the empty chair. Then at last, wearier than ever, the Chief Engineer stood up. He did not say anything; but he indicated with a jerk of his head to

the men opposite and to me that he wanted to speak to us outside; and in that deadly silence we followed him out of the room.

METHODICALLY for the next hour a complete search of the steamer was made. Every cupboard was opened; every corner in the holds was searched. It all revealed nothing, except that John Vincent Bland was no longer on board. After that, staff and passengers were interviewed one by one, and asked whether they had heard the shot, where they were at the time, and whether they had noticed anything unusual either before or after.

I was very conscious of the empty berth in my cabin when I went to bed that night, and I could not sleep. For what it was worth, I then had the following meager information. The time of the shot had been amply confirmed as being at six-forty. One could still see the banks of papyrus dimly at that hour, and two of the missionaries stated that they had seen a canoe with two paddlers following up the steamer near the bank on the port side almost exactly at that time. They added that it was too dark to distinguish any crocodile if there had been one.

On board, the most hopeful source of information was the two bathroom attendants, who were Arabs; but they were little help. The one who looked after the two ladies' baths said that only one was occupied at the time (by Mrs. Postmaster-General). The other he had prepared for Mlle. Valdaris, and was on his way back from knocking on her door when he heard the shot. She had answered his knock. He did not see anyone entering or leaving any of the lavatories.

The men's bathroom attendant had similarly filled both baths and had gone to the cabin shared by the Dutchman and the Czech to tell them it was ready. One of them had answered, but he could not say which. He heard the shot almost at the same time; and when he got back, after a few words with another Arab servant on the way, both baths were occupied. He also had not seen anyone enter or leave the lavatories, and had gone for and again immediately to answer bells from Cabins 3 and 7.

The Norwegian, who had a cabin to himself, his companion having got off at Malakal, said he was the occupier of one of these baths, and had heard the shot while he was in it. The Dutchman and the Czech both denied answering the attendant in their cabin. The Dutchman said he had gone to the Norwegian's cabin to have a word with him, then finding the cabin empty and a bath prepared, he had appropriated it. He had heard no shot, but that no doubt was because he had turned the cold tap, which made a

loud groaning noise, full on. The Czech said he was on the upper deck at the time hunting for a silver pencil which was missing when he turned out his pockets. He had found the pencil with the aid of a torch, heard no shot, and returned to the cabin a few seconds before the Dutchman came back in his dressing-gown.

The upshot of all this was that neither the Dutchman, the Norwegian nor the Czech had a definite alibi. Nor, incidentally, had I, for I had modestly drawn the curtains before I started to undress. . . .

I did get to sleep in the end that night, but woke early and lay waiting impatiently for morning tea. There were the usual sounds of the decks being scrubbed outside, and everything seemed normal enough except that empty unslept-in bunk opposite me. The emptiness began to get on my nerves. The man had undoubtedly been murdered, and by now the body had probably been eaten by crocodiles. You could not dredge for a body in the Sudd and find out how he had been killed. We had not even been able to stop and turn round and have a hunt for it. It just could not be done, with that mass of barges tied on, and we had to go on through the endless papyrus as though nothing had happened.

But something very much had happened. And the man who had made it happen was no doubt lying in his cabin, like me, waiting for his morning tea. He might be a lunatic who intended to throw another of us to the crocodiles that very evening. And we did not have the consolation to feel that the police were in charge and that we had handed over. There were no police, no reporters, no newspapers: nothing to take responsibility off our own shoulders. Only the sky and the papyrus watched us; and instead of all the forces of law and order, we just had one weary Scotch engineer to unravel the mystery.

Everyone was subdued at breakfast, and few ate with any relish. After breakfast, instead of talking as usual, nearly everyone started to write letters—and they looked up jumpily when anyone passed near. When people did speak, it was about the heat or the weariness of the scenery. Tongues would loosen in time, no doubt; but for the moment they were tied. And when I passed the cabin of the chief missionary, he had his whole flock there on their knees praying for guidance.

Hélène had breakfasted in her cabin, but she was there on deck with her needlework in the usual place later in the morning. There was no shooting of crocodiles that day, and there was no cluster of admirers round her. They were all up answering questions in the Chief Engineer's cabin.

For once I had the scene to myself, but for once did not feel inclined to take advantage of it. However, she called to me as I passed.

"Come and talk to me for a little while."

I sat down then, and made some remark about the advantage of having needlework to do.

"It is a help," she agreed. Then she looked at me steadily. "There is no mistake, is there? The nice American has been killed?"

"I'm afraid so," I said shortly.

"But why him?" she asked. "He did not interfere. He was only interested in his own affairs. Why must it be him?"

I could not answer this, and she returned to her needlework.

"I thought it would be different in Africa," she said bitterly. "But it is the same: just the same as it was in Greece."

I stayed for an hour longer, talking to her; and I think I did manage to comfort her a little. I said we were still too near the past to be entirely free of it. There were still a lot of private accounts to be settled, and this no doubt was one of them. We must just wait and hope for the real peace to come.

I did not know then how near the truth I was; nor did I much care; whoever might kill and whoever might be killed, I was really only aware of one thing at the time. And that was that the beauty of Nefertiti had only existed twice in the world, and that the second time was in my life while I was still a young man.

IT was soon after tea that afternoon that I was handed a note requesting me to come up to the Chief Engineer's cabin. I went up at once, and found him as weary and unsmiling as ever. The tall thin tarboosh was with him, looking dreamily out of the window at the endless waste of papyrus.

"You know Mr. Feylim," the Engineer began without ceremony. "He is the only lawyer on board, and he is helping me about this shooting. He understands English perfectly."

The tarboosh bowed stiffly from the waist.

"I am very pleased to give what help I can," he said. "You should understand, however, that I am not a criminal lawyer. I am representing the Egyptian Government in certain negotiations regarding the upper waters of the Nile. I thought it would help me if I saw those upper waters myself. That is the only reason I am here with my other Egyptian friend, who is a hydrological expert. We pretended not to understand English, because we did not want to be interrupted in our work. Now, as you know, we have been interrupted—rather seriously."



"Nobody said he fired a rifle!" Mr. Feylim complacently retorted.

After this long introduction, the Engineer invited me gloomily to take a seat beside him on the bed. I took it; and Mr. Feylim, who was occupying the only chair, abruptly went on:

"Why are you traveling on this steamer, Mr. Carter? May I ask?"

I explained that I had ideas of settling in Rhodesia—or perhaps East Africa; and he nodded.

"Quite so," he said. "Everybody seems to want to leave Europe, and I don't blame them. That, however, is a minor consideration. The real reason that we have asked you to come up here is that you were sharing a cabin with Mr. John Vincent Bland. We thought you might be able to give us some information about his character and behavior. You will find,

by the way, that all his belongings have been removed from your cabin into safe custody."

I thought for a moment before I replied.

"He was quiet and reserved for an American," I said at length. "I think he disliked sharing a cabin even more than I did. But he was most considerate, and very tidy. That's really all I can tell you about him. He never discussed his private affairs."

Mr. Feylim smiled, stopped smiling; then shot his next startling question at me under scrutiny.

"Would it surprise you to know that his name wasn't John Vincent Bland, and that he wasn't an American at all?"

"Yes, it would surprise me considerably," I answered. "Not so much that

he wasn't an American, as that he could have any reason for traveling under an assumed name."

Mr. Feylim nodded.

"Quite so," he said. "On the other hand, documents have been found among his papers which indicate conclusively that he was a German, not an American, and that his real name was Franz Heissler."

This name did not convey anything to me, and I said nothing. Mr. Feylim gave me a searching look and proceeded:

"Franz Heissler, as you may or may not know, was a very notorious Nazi. He was wanted not only for various atrocities, but also for the theft of some unset diamonds worth a quarter of a million pounds. The War Crimes Tribunals have been looking for him for months."

ALL this was surprising and interesting; but it did not seem to me quite to fit. I glanced at the Chief Engineer; but his face was shut, revealing nothing except a longing to be somewhere else.

"Wasn't it odd," I asked, "that with an identity like that, he should carry evidence of it about with him?"

"Very odd," Mr. Feylim agreed, "so odd, in fact, that the only explanation is that he fully intended that evidence to be discovered after his disappearance from the steamer."

That did not throw much more light on the matter, so far as I was concerned, and I just shook my head. The Engineer lit a cigarette, offered me one as an afterthought, and Mr. Feylim continued:

"Although I am not a criminal lawyer, that is not to say that I have not met criminal types in my thirty years' work in Cairo. I have met so many, indeed, that I think I can put myself into the skin of them. What, for instance, would have been the first thing I would have tried to do if I had been in Herr Heissler's boots?"

"Get out of Europe," I suggested.

"Exactly," Mr. Feylim agreed. "And with the loot! And where do you think I would have gone?"

"Africa perhaps," I said.

"Cairo first, I think," Mr. Feylim corrected me. "All big European criminals pass through Cairo at one time or another. But that, of course, would only have been a temporary measure. My real problem was the disposal of the body: my own body, this time. What I wanted was to dispose of it in such a way that Franz Heissler was presumed to be dead, and that therefore nobody could hang him by the neck any more, or interfere in other unpleasant ways. I cannot think of any better way to be presumed to be dead than to fall off this steamer in the crocodile-infested swamp which is known as the Sudd."

I could not help smiling at this point. Mr. Feylim was an engaging person, and obviously took the world as he found it.

"However," he went blandly on, "with a quarter of a million pounds' worth in my pocket, the last thing I want is to be really dead. So obviously I have another little plan at the back of my head. I have friends, too. Perhaps I have friends in Abyssinia, which isn't far away from the Sudd, and where there are still a few Fascist nests which have not been smoked out. Perhaps my friends could arrange for a canoe to pick me up, say, at six-forty P.M. on the day I had arranged to fall off the steamer—" He paused and gave me what was almost a wink. Then he ended: "By the way, if you wanted to fall off this steamer, unobserved by the passengers, but observed by the paddler of the canoe, what time would you choose?"

"Dusk, I suppose," I said.

"A most sensible time," Mr. Feylim agreed. "And what part of the ship would you select?"

"Somewhere at the tail end, I think."

"Right again! But you wouldn't like to make a loud splash—which is what would happen if you jumped off the top—or even lower—deck. Some officious person might call, 'Man overboard!' And some other officious person might pull you out of the river and spoil everything. So naturally you begin to look around carefully, and you find that alongside the window, both of the 'Gents' and the 'Ladies,' there is a steel ladder, from the float near the paddle-wheel, up to the water-tank on the top. I suggest that is just what would appeal to you. But again there is a slight difficulty. The 'Gents' is obviously the place for a gentleman to go; but it is on the starboard side—the wrong side of the paddle-wheel. So in the end you decide on the 'Ladies,' which is on the port side. It may interest you to know that the glass window and the mosquito window were both found open there.

"The door also was found unlocked, which in a sense is surprising. On the other hand, you would not like to leave a door locked on the inside with nobody in the place, so perhaps you unlocked it just before you went out through the window. In any case, this small torn piece of material was discovered attached to one of the hinges of the window. I confess it is not like anything Mr. Bland was in the habit of wearing. It is in fact more a woman's material than a man's. But I suggest that it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that John Vincent Bland, *alias* Franz Heissler, was wearing a skirt when he went into the 'Ladies' to make his go-away."

I looked at Mr. Feylim admiringly. For an amateur, I thought he was do-

ing extremely well. But there still seemed to be something missing; and I again glanced at the Engineer to see if any expression had come into his face. But he obviously was bored with this tiresome business of life and death, and wanted to get back to his engines.

"I don't quite see why there should have been a shot," I said at length.

"Nor did Herr Heissler!" Mr. Feylim replied at once. "The shot was not part of his plan at all. It was part of somebody else's plan, a plan to put Herr Heissler where he couldn't either enjoy his booty or do any more harm. If justice in the impersonal shape of the War Crimes Tribunal was on his track, it is equally reasonable to suppose that there must have been a number of others, with highly personal motives, who wanted to settle accounts with him. Dutchmen, shall we say, or Norwegians or Czechs—or even Englishmen? Or perhaps Greeks?"

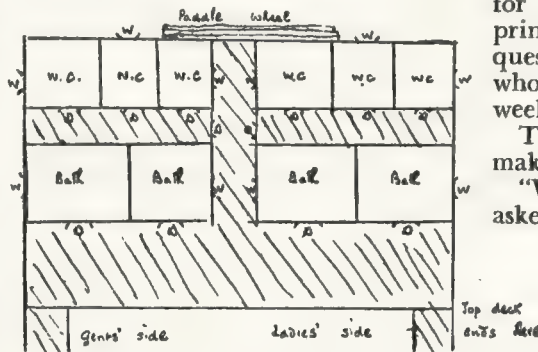
"You're not suggesting," I protested at once, "that Mlle. Valdaris could have had anything to do with this?"

"I'm suggesting that Herr Heissler was deliberately murdered," Mr. Feylim answered unconcernedly, "and that we are all under suspicion—including myself. For I have no alibi at six-forty yesterday evening. I was alone in my cabin—just as you say you were." He paused, then asked suddenly: "You are no doubt familiar with the geography of the stern end of this ship?"

"Only with the 'Gents' side," I said guardedly.

"Then perhaps you would tell me if this little map I have made is reasonably accurate?"

He handed me a piece of paper with a plan on it as follows:



"You will note," he added as I began to study it, "that deck and passages are shaded. Doors are marked D, while windows are marked W. You will also note that there are only two windows facing aft. The one on the 'Ladies' side is the one Herr Heissler climbed out of; and the one on the 'Gents' side is the one from which somebody shot him."

This was clear enough from the plan: but again there was something which did not seem quite to fit. And in a moment I had remembered what

it was: namely, the window of the middle 'Gents.' The hinges were on the left side all right, but the window itself was rather narrow:

"It's a clear enough plan," I said at length. "But I don't see how anyone could aim a rifle at the required angle from that window unless he fired from his left shoulder."

"NOBODY said he fired a rifle!" Mr. Feylim complacently retorted, and at the same time pulled a sheet off a table in the corner of the cabin. This revealed a whole armory of weapons: five revolvers, in fact, as well as the two rifles. "These are all waiting for fingerprint tests," he went on. "So you mustn't touch. The rifles, as you know, belonged to Herr Heissler and the Czech. These two old-fashioned weapons are owned, one by the Postmaster-General and one by the hook-nosed Belgian. These other two more modern articles are the property of the Dutchman and the Norwegian, and they did not declare them at the Customs. So careless! Finally, this pretty little one with the mother-of-pearl is the property of Mlle. Valdaris."

I was getting annoyed at the way he kept bringing Hélène into it.

"A nice collection!" I observed coldly. "But what about the other one which is lying at the bottom of the Sudd?"

Mr. Feylim made a grimace as he covered the armory up again.

"I haven't forgotten that one," he said. "It's the one flaw in my beautiful case. . . . However, there it is. We can't do anything more until we get to Bor, in three days' time. At Bor there will be somebody waiting for us. He will take all our fingerprints and ask a lot of disagreeable questions. He may even impound the whole ship and keep us there for weeks. It's a filthy little place."

This roused the Engineer at last to make some comment.

"What about my schedule?" he asked.

Mr. Feylim put his arm around my shoulder as we left the cabin and told me that—except for the finding of the torn bit of material—there was nothing confidential about what had just been said. It would be a good thing, he suggested, if I spread the news abroad. If the guilty man knew that there was only one piece missing in the puzzle, he might supply that piece by trying to hide it too thoroughly. A war of nerves could be very successful, especially in the sultry solitude of the Sudd.

So I spread the news abroad, and made it clear that we would all have our fingerprints taken at Bor. The Norwegian, the Czech and the Dutchman all took the same line when I told them what was known. They all said that Heissler was just about the worst of all the Nazis, that he had done filthy things in each of their countries, and that they would all have gladly shot him themselves if they had known who he was. But they hadn't. . . . For the rest, the Belgians just jabbered about the money they would lose if they missed their connection at Juba, and the missionaries continued to pray for guidance. The one touch of humor came from the Postmaster-General. He said it was disgraceful that an Egyptian had been called in to take charge, when he was the senior British official on board, and an M.B.E. Then the very evening after I had told him about the fingerprints, he appeared with all the fingers of his right hand bandaged. He said he had squeezed it in the cupboard door; but people used to look at his hand in a way that nearly gave his wife hysterics.

I did not suspect him myself. Apart from the fact that Postmaster-Generals are never very quick on the draw, I had been doing a little sleuthing myself. It seemed interesting to me that all the potential suspects had proved themselves to be bad shots. That of course may have been done on purpose, but in either case it brought me back to that narrow window in the "Gents." So the next morning, after locking the door, I stealthily opened the window and tried an imaginary shot first with my right and then with my left hand. I had already decided that a successful shot with the right hand was almost an impossibility except for an extremely small slim man, when I noticed a black Sudanese face watching me with much interest from the top of the tank above.

AFTER that, all the time to Bor, I was looking for a man who was small or slim enough—or alternatively showed any sign of being left-handed; and at the same time I was continuously finding the same black Sudanese face regarding me round some corner with the same look of interest. Suspicion and ill-ease grew as the dreary papyrus slid slowly past on either side. The most intolerable thing about the Nazi régime was that you always knew that there was an enemy beside you and never knew who it was. It seemed ironical to me that even a dead Nazi could manage to produce this intolerable sense of suspicion in its most virulent form.

Still, to be quite honest, it was something else and not the suspicion that made those days so slow and depressing for me. Hélène was keeping

to her cabin, and the light had gone out of my sky.

From the river Bor had a stone quay, two steam cranes, a flagstaff, more than the average number of nude Africans, and a pleasant riverside avenue of shady trees. A small group of Europeans in sun helmets watched the steamer berth, and twenty-five armed native police were stationed at intervals along the quay. It certainly looked as though they already knew all about us.

Hélène was up again, and she and I were leaning on the rail watching the Europeans come on board. We longed to get off the ship and have a walk on dry ground, but there seemed to be little prospect of that. There was, in fact, now another notice on the board above the one about shooting. This said that no one was to land without the District Commissioner's authority, and that would not be given except for very special reasons.

We were still leaning on the rail when I heard a voice behind me.

"Mr. Carter?"

I turned round and found an elderly man with gray hair and a gray tussore suit beside me.

"Yes," I answered.

I was quite expecting him to inform me that anything I said would be taken down and used in evidence. But he held out his hand.

"My name's Questly," he said. "Johnson wrote to me from Khartoum and said you'd be passing through. Irrigation is my job, and birds my hobby. I've been here for thirty years."

I then introduced him to Hélène: and hoping for some invitation from him, said she was traveling alone.

He went on:

"I gather you've had quite an exciting voyage."

"Rather too exciting," Hélène said quietly.

"Yes, I believe that. . . . The wires and the wireless have been buzzing here. They've even flown the whole Homicide Squad down from Khartoum. Must have cost a packet. . . . But the point is that you won't get away till tomorrow, if then. So you're both dining with me tonight. I'll fetch you at seven-thirty on the quay."

"It's very kind," Hélène began, "but really—"

Mr. Questly looked at her severely.

"Young lady," he said, "you may or may not wish to see the curious people who inhabit this wilderness. That is beside the point. The important thing is that we who inhabit the wilderness demand as a right that anyone passing through from the outside world should come to see us. Now!"

Hélène laughed, and answered.

"I shall be delighted to accept your very kind invitation."

"But what about the District Commissioner?" I asked.

"I'll fix that with old George," Mr. Questly answered shortly. "He's very amenable to my advice. . . . And now I see the Homicide Squad bearing down on you, so I'll leave you to it. So long! Seven-thirty on the quay."

For the rest of the day we were busy telling our stories, first to one man, then another. I suppose they were looking for discrepancies, but I don't know. The only extra thing I had to explain was what I was doing waving my arms outside the window of the "Gents" two days after the alleged crime. I told the truth; but they gave no obvious signs of believing it.

Punctually at seven-twenty-five the headlights of a car appeared on the quay. Two minutes later we were showing our passes at the barrier, and ten minutes afterward we were having cocktails outside in Mr. Questly's garden. His house was of the usual bungalow type, with a corrugated iron roof painted green. The remarkable thing about it in that country was that it had a view. The rise on which it was built was only a few feet high; but from it we could see, half a mile away, the metallic winding ribbon of the Nile stretching north and south in the moonlight, just as though it were a molten luminous crack dividing the world into two halves. There was a faint smell of frangipani around us, and cicadas and frogs kept up a continual concert in the still air.

It was lovely to dine out of doors after being enmeshed behind wire for so long. Mr. Questly explained that it was the distance from the river and the season of the year that made it possible: if it had been a month later, we would have been bitten to death. But there were no mosquitoes that evening, and there was no shortage either of food or drink in Mr. Questly's wilderness. I have never had a more exquisite dinner anywhere.

I had asked my host to keep off the subject of the murder, as I thought Hélène was distressed about it. He had acceded to my request, and during dinner we had talked on every subject under the sun except the happenings on the steamer. It was over coffee that Hélène herself brought up that subject.

"Mr. Questly," she asked suddenly, "I suppose you have heard the whole story and know what is supposed to have happened on board the steamer?"

Mr. Questly answered rather guardedly.

"I know Mr. Feylim's theory—if that's what you mean."

"That is what I mean," Hélène went on. "And I want to know if you believe it."

"Do you believe it yourself, Miss Valdaris?"

"Not entirely, I'm afraid."

"Nor do I," said Mr. Questly firmly. "I am, of course, an amateur like Mr. Feylim himself.—He has the advantage of a legal training, and I have the advantage of having read every murder case, whether fact or fiction, which has been published in the last forty years. Also I know the Sudd. I have done that journey a dozen times, and I know that it is very common to see a canoe with a paddler or two paddlers lying alongside the bank. Mr. Feylim's whole theory depends on there being a canoe there at the time of the shot. He has no reason, except his own wishful thinking, to connect the two together; and I myself think it much more likely that it was a pure coincidence. If it was a coincidence, Mr. Feylim's whole case goes by the board."

MR. QUESTLY paused and passed the decanter on its second journey.

"Putting myself in Herr Heissler's place," he went on, "I should have discarded that method of disposing of myself as altogether too chancy. One bit of the Sudd is exactly like another. I don't see how you could possibly be sure of the canoe being in the right place to pick you up. Still less could you be sure about the time. We never know within three or four hours the time the steamer is going to arrive here. Even if the canoe was there waiting, it was very likely that the steamer would pass it in full daylight and spoil the whole thing."

"Do you suggest that the Heissler story is all a myth?" I asked.

"No. It remains to be proved, but I think it will be proved in time. Franz Heissler was on board, all right."

"But why on earth should he get out of the window of the 'Ladies' unless he was going to make a get-away?"

"I don't think he did get out of the window of the 'Ladies,' and I don't think the shot came from the window of the 'Gents,' either. That presupposes on the part of somebody else a knowledge of Heissler's plans which, to say the least of it, was unlikely."

"Then have you any other explanation?"

"Yes. . . . I don't see why Herr Heissler need have been the American any more than he might have been the Dutchman, the Norwegian or the Czech. None of them are vouched for in the way, for instance, that you are. Again, it wasn't necessary for Herr Heissler to dispose of his own body to achieve his results. Anybody would do, so long as he could plant the incriminating documents in such a way as to persuade people that Heissler was dead."

I looked at Hélène, and saw that she was shaken. But it was too late now to draw back.



Illustrated by John McDermott

"The wires and wireless have been buzzing here. They've even flown the whole Homicide Squad down from Khartoum. Must have cost a packet."

"Are you suggesting," I asked, "that we still have Heissler with us?"

Mr. Questly nodded.

"Yes, I suppose that's what it amounts to. You see, the great advantage of my theory is that he did not have to choose his victim until the opportunity occurred. Any of you would have done—except perhaps yourself. The others are just names and faces without any known past."

"And the opportunity?" I asked.

"I should watch that Czech, if I were you," he suggested. "He was on the top deck at the time. I think the shot may well have come from there, after all. A shot and a heave was all that was wanted. He would have to chance someone seeing from the side barge; but that was a small risk at that hour. As for anyone hearing the splash, that's all nonsense. The paddlewheel makes an infernal racket."

Again I looked at Hélène.

"Are you feeling the cold?" I asked.

She shook her head.

"No," she answered quietly. "I'm just wishing I hadn't asked Mr. Questly what he thought. . . . But it is late. And it is rather cool. I think we ought to get back to the boat."

Mr. Questly was all for driving us back; but I had had a look at Hélène's shoes and quickly suggested that we walk. I added that we had nothing to fear, as nobody, not even the missionaries, had a pass to go on shore except us.

That seemed to reassure Hélène a little; and after thanking Mr. Questly for his superb dinner, we set off down the tree-lined avenue, which was speckled with moonlight.

"You don't really think Heissler's still alive?" I asked at length.

"No," she said quite firmly, "I don't."

"And you're not really worried, are you?"

"No," she said again. "Only a little sad about life."

I kissed her then for the first time. She did not abandon herself in any way; but she said she was glad I had been on the boat.

THERE were all sorts of rumors the next morning. An arrest was to be made at any moment: it would be the Czech, the Norwegian, Mr. Feylim himself. Alternatively it was stated that nothing could be done without further instructions from Khartoum, and we would be imprisoned at Bor for the rest of the month.

Like most rumors, these were all false. We were under way again by the late afternoon; and all that had really happened was that we had been reminded that the extradition laws now applied all over Africa, and that justice, though slow, always got there in the end, like the tortoise.

We had been delayed nearly twenty-four hours at Bor, and from the heavy breathing of the engines and the pounding of the paddle, it appeared that we were trying to make up that time and reach Juba in two days instead of three. Whether it was this quickening in our progress, or the fact that the murder was now nearly six days old, people were becoming more normal again. And this applied to the Dutchman, the Norwegian and the Czech, as well as to the rest. They remained clustered around Hélène, and no one else could get near her.

After what Mr. Questly had suggested, I thought this must be very trying for Hélène. I also found it very trying for myself; for I felt that the time had come when I could make some real progress, if only I could have her to myself for a while. Moreover, Juba was not the end of the journey. All five of us were going on to Nairobi, another seven days of travel by road, steamer, rail, steamer, rail again. And it seemed ridiculous that I should have to share Hélène all that time with so many others. So finally I sent off a wireless to some big noise at Juba, to whom Mr. Questly had given me an introduction, asking if he could not possibly fix up two reservations—two reservations only—by air from Juba to Nairobi.

Meanwhile there was a diversion on board. The first evening out from Bor one of the beady-eyed children was found playing with a small shining object. This object was declared by the omniscient Mr. Feylim to be a diamond; and though small, very probably one of those which Franz Heissler had smuggled out of Europe. It had been found by the child at the stern end of the upper deck, and various theories were put forward as to how it got there. But then Mrs. Postmaster-General came forward and not only claimed the diamond, but produced the ring from which it was missing.

This rather quenched the more extravagant explanations. But it awakened the general interest of the passengers in diamonds as a commodity, as well as renewing the unfounded suspicions against the Postmaster-General. Diamonds, unlike human life, were indestructible; and now that the first shock was over, people began to realize that while nobody could—or even wanted to—restore life to Franz Heissler, it was possible to search for the diamonds which, rightly or wrongly, had been in his possession. The missionaries again prayed for guidance when they observed this new unworthy trend in the attitude of their fellow-passengers. But the beady-eyed father of the beady-eyed child proceeded to draw maps of the Sudd where the accident had happened—no doubt, with a view to obtaining a concession for

the fishing rights there. As for the rest of the passengers, they forgot the diamonds as quickly as they had forgotten the claims of justice when the first herd of elephant was seen browsing placidly on the starboard bank.

In the end, we reached Juba only ten hours late. Hélène and I were only there for three-quarters of an hour, for my influential friend had fixed the air reservations. I have really only two memories of the place—which was just like Bor, only on the other side of the river. The first was of the face of the Chief Engineer as he looked over the rail as the passengers left his steamer. He had got rid of us at last, and with a little speeding in the turn-round, would be able to keep to his schedule after all. He was a happy man for once. The second memory was also of faces. It was of the faces of the Dutchman, the Norwegian and the Czech as the aircraft took off on Juba airdrome. They looked as glum as the Engineer had looked happy. I thought of them quite a lot during the next few hours as the aircraft flew on over river and forest on the way to Nairobi, with Hélène's glorious profile between me and the window. How restful it would be for them on that long journey to have nobody's luggage to carry except their own!

WITH just six days ahead of me with Hélène to myself I naturally made full use of them. Nairobi as a capital town disappointed me; there were only two streets worth the name, and the founders seem to have been at great pains to choose a site which had no view at all of the beautiful country surrounding it. There were, however, amenities there which had been lacking in the Sudd: shops stocked with goods; cinemas with films only a year old; horse-races; two night-clubs; and I was able to drive Hélène out into the country and see some game in the reserve.

Altogether, in my own estimation, I was pretty well satisfied with the progress I had made during those six days. She was not the sort of young woman who could be swept off her feet; but she seemed to like my presence as a temporary companion, and I saw no reason why she should not get accustomed to it as a more permanent one. At the same time I was disappointed at one thing: I had hoped to meet her uncle who lived in Nairobi. When you are going to marry a girl, it is most desirable to meet her family beforehand, and I gathered that the uncle was the nearest surviving relation except for the sister in the Congo, who was out of reach. I thought I might have impressed the uncle with my durable qualities as a husband; but he had unfortunately been called away to Cape-

town on business, and showed no sign of returning. Hélène was staying in a hotel, and I was staying in the other one.

The seventh day I was waiting for her at the bar of her hotel when the Norwegian and Czech walked in and sat down on either side of me. There was something about their manner which made me uncomfortable from the start.

"Hullo!" said the Czech in his dark way.

"Hullo!" I answered.

"Having a good time?" asked the Norwegian with more than usual of his babylike innocence.

"Not bad," I said lightly. "What are you going to drink?"

They both said they would like double whiskies, and the latter appeared almost simultaneously on the counter. I noticed that they lifted their glasses to each other and ignored me although I was paying for their contents.

"Hélène all right?" asked the Czech after a pause.

"Yes," I said. "She's staying here, as a matter of fact." There was no good trying to disguise it, as she was likely to appear at any moment.

"Nothing happened to the uncle, I hope," said the Norwegian.

"Not as far as I know," I answered rather coldly, and then added: "Nothing happened to the Dutchman, I trust?"

They looked at each other and almost winked.

"No," said the Norwegian; "he's all right."

"But still putting his long nose into things," added the Czech. "He's in Cairo now. Flew straight back there from Juba."

"Good heavens! What did he do that for?"

"Forgot his toothbrush, I suppose," said the Czech.

It was at this moment that I saw Hélène enter with all her usual charm and elegance at the far end of the bar. They saw her too; quite obviously. But after I had gone up to meet her and turned round again, they had entirely disappeared. I did not see either of them again for nearly three months.

This incident upset me a little. The Norwegian and the Czech no doubt had some reason for their coldness to me after my trick on them at Juba; but they had no cause to be rude to Hélène, as they undoubtedly had been. If they felt badly, I expected some subtlety from them and not this obvious boorishness. Hélène, however, I am glad to say, remained completely unconcerned about it. They had been on the road a long time, she said, and obviously had some other pressing engagement. That was quite the normal ending for steamer friendships.

One curious result of my finding myself suddenly without any rivals for Hélène's favor was that I cooled off a little bit. Hélène herself, however, remained exactly the same, neither cooler nor warmer; and in about a week's time I had almost got back to the point of making my formal proposal. I think in fact that I would have made it that very Friday night when she had been dancing at one of the two night-clubs. The thing that prevented me was that I suddenly thought I saw the Dutchman's long nose and humorous face watching me from behind a pillar near the entrance. I could not be absolutely sure whether I had seen him or not; but it put me off my stroke, and I was rather relieved ten minutes later when Hélène said she was tired and asked me to escort her back to her hotel.

I said good-night to her at the foot of the stairs, arranged for next day's meeting, and went back out into the street. And there, unmistakable this time, was the Dutchman waiting for me.

"Hullo!" he said casually. "Nice to see you again."

I said it was nice too; and he suggested that we should have a drink. I said I had been dancing and was rather tired, and he said he knew that, and that a drink was just what I needed to revive me. There seemed to be no escape after that, and we went back to the night-club I had just left.

"You've missed the Norwegian and the Czech," I told him as we sat down.

"They came through a week ago."

"See much of them?" he asked.

"No, not very much."

"H'm. Not surprised. I expect they'll lie low for a bit now."

His drink was now in front of him, and he just sat looking at it as though he had never seen a whisky before.

"Hear you went back to Cairo from Juba," I said at length.

"That's right," he answered. "And flew back here. Had a very interesting week there."

"Wasn't it rather a waste of time to come all the way up the Nile from Cairo, and then fly straight back?"

"Not really. You see, I didn't know about Heissler when I left Cairo. I did when I went back."

"Learn anything more about him?"

"Plenty! . . . But there wasn't really much that old man Feylim hadn't guessed."

"You mean he was right!"

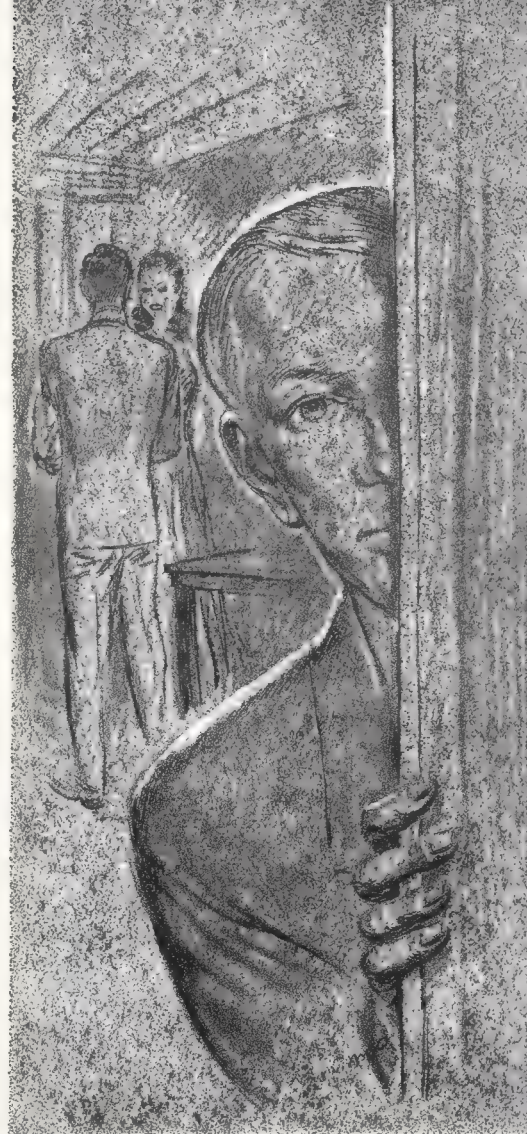
"Absolutely."

"But he seemed to think it might be you who had fired the shot!"

"I know. . . . That was really his only bad mistake."

"Then who was it?"

"One of the other two, of course. I think on the whole the Norwegian had the better reasons for doing it."



I thought I saw the Dutchman watching me from behind a pillar.

I was just gazing at him. All this might be true, and it might equally be a leg-pull. That twisted humorous face of his made it impossible to tell when he was speaking the truth or not.

"The interesting thing," he went on suddenly, "is that they got the two chaps in the canoe. One was a native and the other an Eyetie with his face painted black. The fool might have got away, but he couldn't resist waiting to try to recover the diamonds. Heissler had them on him, of course."

"You're not inventing all this?" I asked.

"Why the hell should I?" he retorted. "I'm only confirming what old Feylim suggested. He was right even about the hide-out. It was to have been Abyssinia. The Eyetie confessed all that."

I was pretty well convinced now, and remained silent for a moment, thinking of the Czech's dark face and the Norwegian's baby one.

"Will they get either of those two?" I asked.

He shook his head.

"Nope. . . . It was a nice job, and there's no evidence. Besides, the authorities won't worry overmuch now. It'll save them a packet of money, not having to bring Heissler to trial."

That was a relief to me. I don't believe in men taking the law into their own hands, but I don't believe in the winners trying the losers either. The one thing I did believe was that all Nazis were better dead.

"Well, I'm glad to know the end of the story," I said at length.

"It isn't the end," he answered rather sharply. "There was one thing that old Feylim didn't guess, and I rather think it concerns you. . . . You were with Hélène this evening, weren't you?"

"I don't see what that has got to do with it."

"You will, old boy, in a minute. The point is that Hélène really ought not to marry just yet."

"And why not, may I ask?"

"Because she hasn't been a widow long enough!"

That knocked me back in my chair just as if I had had a punch in the middle. But then I had a look at his long nose and decided that he was trying to put me off for some secret purpose of his own. Or perhaps it wasn't so secret. He was just trying to grab Hélène for himself.

"How do you make that out?" I asked quite calmly.

"She was Heissler's wife," he said. "Emmy Bauerling was her real name. She's as incorrigible a Nazi as he was."

THIS time it was nearly a knockout—at least until I saw the absurdity of it. When I saw that, I rose to my feet with dignity and prepared to leave him where he was.

"Sit down, you fool!" the Dutchman ordered harshly. "What you do after I've finished is your own concern. But I'm not going to let you do it with your eyes shut."

I sat down again.

"All right," I said. "It's very kind of you to take all the trouble. . . . Was there any particular reason why they weren't traveling as man and wife?"

"Every possible reason," he answered scathingly. "If he had left a widow on board, she would have received more than our condolences. We'd have watched her every step for a long time afterward, and that wasn't what they wanted at all."

"And what did they want?"

"For him to get away with the loot. For her to join him later in Abyssinia. For both of them to live happily there ever after—or at least until the going was good enough for them to return to Germany."

No doubt there was an answer to all this, but I couldn't find it at the moment. I remained silent, and after a pause he went on:

"Has she introduced you to her uncle in Nairobi?"

I shook my head. He was now getting unpleasantly near the region of my own doubts.

"Know his name?" he persisted.

"Patra Casopoulos," I said.

He grinned, and tossed his head back.

"Of course one's got to take a chance somewhere," he remarked. "If you're a beautiful young woman and haven't got any friends in the place you are going to, that would seem odd. So I suppose it's better to mention somebody by name. But then if you give a name that isn't in the telephone book, someone may find out and get suspicious; and if you give a name that is in the telephone book, some other suspicious person may ring up the number."

"You—did—ring up the number?"

"Yes. . . . Mr. Casopoulos didn't speak very good English, but he made it clear that he hadn't got a niece and didn't want one."

"Perhaps you got the wrong Casopoulos."

"Perhaps I did," the Dutchman pleasantly agreed. "But here's another interesting thing! You did me a very good turn in flying off with Hélène and leaving the heavy luggage behind to come on by train. It gave me an opportunity to go through her things. I'm rather clever with a lock. It was a trick they taught us in the underground movement."

"And I suppose you found papers admitting that she was Mrs. Heissler?"

"Oh, dear, no. You mustn't underestimate the beautiful Hélène. Apart from some very expensive underclothes, there was only one thing of the least interest in her luggage. It was a very smart little jacket, a jacket without a skirt. It had a vivid green thread in it that exactly matched this."

As he ended, he held out a very small pattern of cloth which he had extracted from his pocketbook. It did not convey anything to me at the moment.

"And what is that?" I asked.

"It's the piece of cloth which was found torn off on the hinge in the 'Ladies.' I pinched it when old Feylim wasn't looking."

"And did you pinch the jacket too, may I ask?"

"Oh, no! I folded it up most carefully and put it back. I thought you might want to have a look at it yourself."

There was a long pause before either of us spoke again. Meanwhile I had demanded the bill.

"Anything else?" I asked at length, when I had paid it.

"No," he said. "Not at present."

"Staying in Nairobi long?"

"Only till tomorrow. Going on to Dar-es-salam."

"Well, I hope you have a pleasant journey."

We both got up and walked out of the room. On the pavement outside he stopped and gave me a searching look.

"You don't believe a word of it, do you?"

"Not a word," I said.

"A pity!" He shook his head gravely. "However, I've done what I intended. Good night."

"Good night," I repeated.

We both walked off along the empty pavement in opposite ways.

IT was true that I did not believe a word of it at that time, but at three the same morning I woke up and found that I was not so sure about it. It was the ideal time of the night for worrying, and I lay awake and worried. And as I tossed on my bed, two more things came into my mind which disturbed me even more than the two which the Dutchman had earlier told me.

The one thing was not so very important. A few days earlier in a restaurant Hélène had dropped her bag; and as I picked it up, two letters had fallen out. I had noticed as I handed them to her that both had Abyssinian stamps on them. That had meant nothing to me at the time, but it did seem to add up to something after what the Dutchman had said.

The other thing was the one which set me to think furiously. It was something I had noticed quite early on the steamer and since forgotten. Of all the men there, the "American" was the only one in whom Hélène was really interested. Nothing had been said, but I had felt it every time he came near. There was something between them. She had enjoyed seeing the other men rush to carry her bags—and him carrying nothing. Even more had she enjoyed the way he beat us all at shooting crocodiles. What explanation could there be of this unless the Dutchman was right?

The struggle in my mind went on continuously from three that morning. It was the age-old struggle of wanting to believe one thing and having to believe another. And as I was meeting Hélène for lunch I only had till one o'clock to decide what I was going to do.

I think in the end the "wanting" would probably have beaten the "having" to believe; but at last—about eleven-thirty—I could bear the hotel no longer and went out walking the streets. It was a dull sunless day, unpleasant out as it was in, and I walked on, worrying and worrying. Then a strange thing happened. First a green thread seemed to come into my thoughts. Then I saw that the thread was not in my thoughts at all, but in the jacket of a woman walking three

paces in front. And then finally I saw that the woman was Hélène.

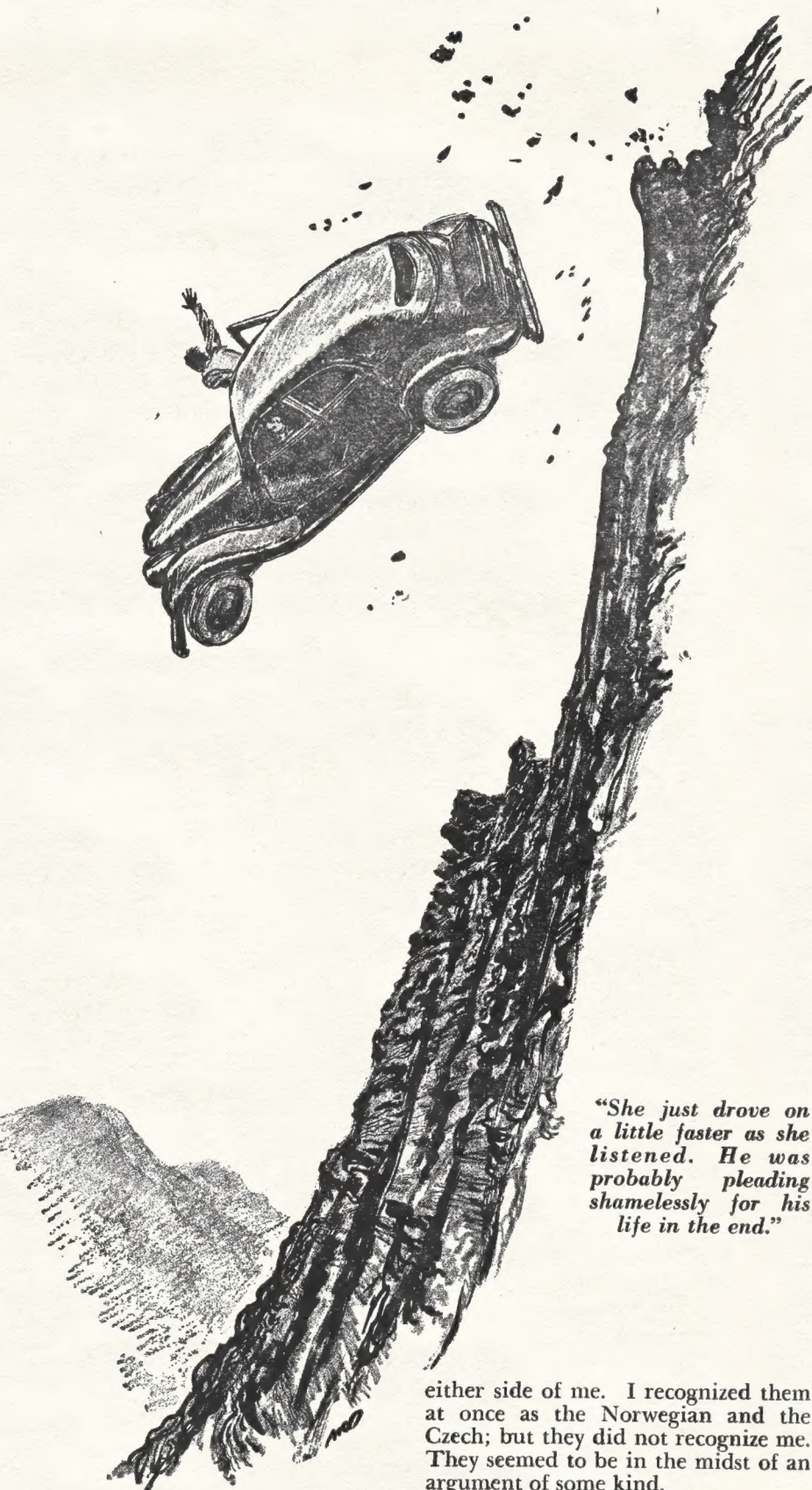
I dived into the nearest shop as she turned her head. It was a chemist's; and I bought a tube of tooth-paste, which was the first thing I could think of. When I had made sure that Hélène had gone on and turned the corner, I hurried back to my hotel, ordered a car by telephone, and packed my things. By lunchtime I was already on my way to Nakuru, where I proposed to wait for a train. I did not care where the train took me, so long as it was not back to Nairobi.

The train actually took me to Kisumu. From there I went on by Lakes Victoria and Tanganyika into Rhodesia, which was what I had originally intended to do. But there was a disturbance in my heart which I had never intended and never wanted to experience again. I could not forget Hélène. She was always there in my thoughts, and my thoughts could not come to any final conclusion about her—not even about the little jacket with the green thread. In the nighttime I decided that she had worn the jacket that day because she loved her husband, and it was the garment which reminded her most of him. In the daytime I told myself that it was simply because it was a sunless day and that was the warmest thing she had to put on.

EVEN after three months I was still thinking of her, still wondering whether the Dutchman had lied to me or not. I was in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, then; and in addition to my pangs over Hélène, I had a tooth that ached. It was so bad that I had to go to the dentist. Like other dentists, he kept me waiting; and like still more dentists, the periodicals in his waiting-room were not very up to date. I was reduced after a time to reading a Kenya weekly paper which was at least a month old; and in the gossip column there I found the following:

The engagement is announced and the marriage will shortly take place between two newcomers to Nairobi. These are Mr. Carl van Eaghen and Miss Hélène Valdaris. Miss Valdaris is a Greek national by birth, and Mr. van Eaghen a Dutchman. We wish them both every good fortune.

I had just finished reading this announcement for the third time when the assistant informed me that the dentist was ready; and I did the rest of my thinking with both the dentist's hands in my mouth and the drill as well. I hardly noticed it when he got onto the nerve, which he very often did. There was another bigger drill working at the back of my head. The Dutchman had invented the whole story just to get Hélène for himself—and I knew at last what I had



"She just drove on a little faster as she listened. He was probably pleading shamelessly for his life in the end."

always suspected—namely, that I was a complete sucker.

That same evening at seven-thirty I was in one of the local bars. I was feeling lonely; and I was thinking, as I had my second drink, how easy it would be for a lonely man to take to it in a big way. Just then two men came in and took the vacant stools on

either side of me. I recognized them at once as the Norwegian and the Czech; but they did not recognize me. They seemed to be in the midst of an argument of some kind.

"I tell you," said the Norwegian across me, "he couldn't have known who she was. It's impossible."

"And I say," answered the Czech, "that he did know. Why, he practically told us as much at Juba."

It was at this moment that they recognized me.

"Why!" said the Czech. "Look who's here!"

"Well, if it isn't the Englishman!" said the Norwegian.

They looked across at each other knowingly for a moment, and then the Norwegian went on:

"Know who we were talking about just now?"

"The Dutchman, I suppose," I said.

"Know who else?" asked the Czech.

"Hélène, perhaps," I said.

"Know that they were married yesterday?"

"No," I said. "But I saw in the paper that they were engaged."

"Weren't you rather keen on Hélène yourself?"

"Yes," I said, "for a time."

There was another knowing glance between them across me.

"Know who Hélène was?" asked the Czech at length.

"Yes," I said. "She was Heissler's wife."

"Oh! How did you find that out?"

"The Dutchman told me."

I EXPECTED both of them to burst into roars of laughter at this; but they didn't. The Czech merely looked across at the Norwegian.

"There! What did I tell you?"

The Norwegian frowned as though a decisive point had been scored off him; then he turned to me.

"D'you know who it was who shot Heissler?"

"Yes," I said.

"Well, who was it?"

"One of you two."

This time they did laugh.

"I suppose the Dutchman told you that, too?"

"Yes," I said. "He did."

"Listen," said the Czech at length: "We two were watching the Dutchman just as closely as he was watching the 'American.' We were all in the Resistance in the war, and we know

how each other's minds work. I saw the Dutchman go into the 'Gents' that evening, and the Norwegian here saw him come out. But we weren't going to give him away. He had a good record. And if he had shot the 'American,' we knew he must have a good reason for it, though we didn't know then how good it was."

"Was the good reason that he wanted to marry his wife?" I asked.

"No," said the Norwegian. "It wasn't. That came after. He probably intended at that time to kill her as well. Or perhaps he didn't know then who she was."

"He certainly didn't know then," said the Czech. "He didn't know at Juba, although he had begun to suspect. It was in Cairo that he learned for certain—and he was already in love with her by then."

The Norwegian nodded. "Yes, I suppose that's it."

"I've no patience with the man," the Czech went on. "He broke Rule I. And if you break Rule I, you're bound to find trouble."

"What is Rule I?" I asked.

"Rule I," said the Czech wearily, "is that when you're on important business, you don't get entangled with any woman."

"And did he really get into trouble?"

"You could call it that," said the Czech darkly. "He's dead, at least. And she's dead. Car accident. She was driving."

This shook me very considerably. But not them. They had already started arguing again.

"Would you stop just for one moment," I interrupted sharply, "and let me know what really has happened?"

"Why, yes," said the Norwegian politely. "They were married yesterday morning. The honeymoon was to

have been spent at the Crest Hotel on Mount Kenya. Charming place, I am told. Nine thousand feet high. Good beds, too, and lovely views. But the road up there is a bit—what you say—hair-raising. Sheer drop, and no parapet. It was at the very top that they went over."

"And she was driving?" I asked.

"Yes," said the Norwegian. "Silly of him! In all the circumstances, I think I'd have driven myself."

"That's just it," added the Czech.

"He went and broke Rule II as well."

"What's Rule II?" I asked.

"Never relax," said the Czech. "At any time."

There was another long pause.

"The mistake we're making," the Czech went on at last, "is that we're thinking of what was in the Dutchman's mind all the time. The clue to the whole thing is what was in Hélène's. Even Nazis can love, and my guess is that she loved that husband of hers. She was just as interested as any of us, too, to know who it was who killed him. Look at the cool way she behaved all the time, never batting an eyelid. I think in the end she discovered who it was, and decided on vengeance. It must have been too easy when she found how badly the Dutchman had fallen for her."

THE Czech stopped a moment while the Norwegian ordered another round of drinks.

"The hill is four miles long," the Czech continued quietly. "For the first two miles she was probably telling him how she was looking forward to all the wonderful things they were going to do on their honeymoon. Then quite casually—in the same tone of voice—she let him know that she knew he had killed her husband. He might have made a grab at the switch then—but I don't think so, for that wasn't where they went over the edge."

"Probably he denied it at first, said it was one of us, but he soon found out that wasn't going to do any good, and sat there sweating in spite of the cool fresh mountain air. He could see at every corner how the drop was getting higher and higher; and perhaps then he confessed the truth, and tried to make something out of the realness of his love for her. But she just drove on a little faster as she listened. He was probably pleading shamelessly for his life in the end. It just shows what can happen, if you break Rule I."

The new round of drinks had arrived by now. The Norwegian lifted his and said "Skoll!" Then he added: "I know there's nothing good that can be said for the Nazis. But if there were, it would be that they could be as ruthless with themselves as they are with other people. . . . What a very beautiful woman she was!"

BIRDS ARE LIKE THAT

WITHOUT using its wings a loon will swim under water at three miles an hour. The loon cannot take off from land, though, for its legs are built too far back. It must reach water before it can lift itself into the air. Loons prefer to live on islands in lakes in flat wet nests. Mrs. Loon takes junior pickaback-riding over the surface of the water.

* * *

Barn owls are far superior to cats as rat-catchers. They swallow their catch whole, never bothering to chew—bones, fur, all are swallowed in one gulp. Later they regorge the bones wrapped in the fur, and these pellets are used for nest-building. Owls can see perfectly well in the daytime but they prefer staying up nights, for that is when their principal provender, the small rodents, forage.

Whether ten or one hundred birds to the flock, the "Canada" geese always fly in V formation. The so-called Canada goose is really an American bird, but our agricultural and industrial growth has pushed him northward. The male is a boxer, using his wings to strike. During one summer period all lose their long feathers and cannot fly.

* * *

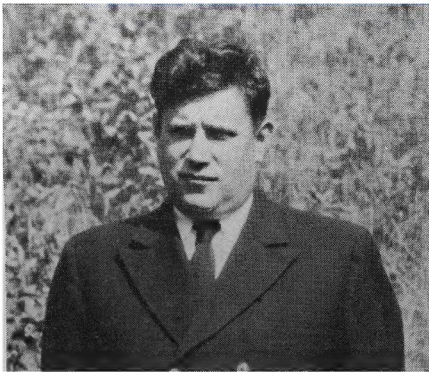
Jays plant many of our trees. While acorns and other nuts are readily accessible they bury these under leaves against the winter. They do so thorough a job that they fail to rediscover perhaps the major portion of their hoard, a great deal of which eventually sprouts.

* * *

The baby kingfisher's bed is made of fish-bones and as prickly as a pin cushion.

—By Simpson M. Ritter

Who's Who in this Issue



Jesse Stuart

I WAS born in 1907 near Riverton, Kentucky, and attended the country schools, but never finished more than two-thirds of a school term during any year. I had to help plant and hoe and harvest the crop. I spent many days in weed-fields and briar thickets hunting rabbits; and nights in the woods hunting 'coons, foxes and 'possums.

At nine I began to hire out to well-to-do farmers for twenty-five cents a day. My mother worked for the same money; my sister, twelve years of age, kept house, and my father farmed. At eleven I quit school entirely to help the family. From eleven to fifteen I cut corn during the season and cut timber and made cross-ties during the winter.

At fifteen I went to a country subscription school to give my grammar a brush. I went sixty days. Then I entered high school. I was like a mule in a new pasture. I finished in 1926. Then I went to work in the American Rolling Mills and spent eleven months of pure hell, forging steel. I learned to be a blacksmith there. I left with \$10.

I tried several colleges but they would not let me enter. Finally, I ran onto Lincoln Memorial at Harrogate, Tenn. They took my \$10 and put me to work in a hayfield. I finished college in three years.

I returned to my home county and taught school two years. During the next summer I worked my way at Peabody College, Nashville, and then entered Vanderbilt to do a year of graduate work. I lived on eleven meals a week from September 22, 1931, to February 19, 1932. The hall I was rooming in burned and everything I had burned with it save the clothes I had on. I lost fifty sonnets, some short stories, my clothes, my thesis, and the job which had given me eleven meals a week. From February 19 to June 2, I lived on one meal a day.

I come from a hardy race of people. My mother's family is English. My

father's are Scotch. The Stuarts and Stewarts, are, and have been, feudists, boozers, country preachers, Republicans and fine soldiers. My mother's people, the Hiltons are, and have been, country schoolteachers, moonshiners, rebels and Democrats. I am the first of my people to finish college.

Desmond Hall

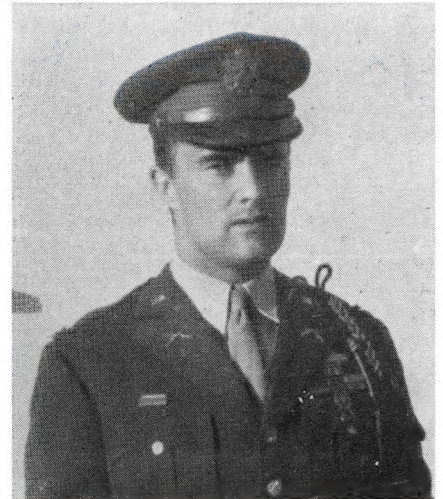
I STARTED life in Sydney, Australia, in 1911, a second generation Antipodean, since my grandparents on both sides came to New Zealand from England around the middle of the last century, making them at least moderately early settlers of that very beautiful and very far-away land. My own branch of the family moved to America—Los Angeles—just after the first World War; I have been back since to Australia and New Zealand on an extended trip, and hope some day to go again.

I have been writing on and off since 1927 or so; one of the first stories, I remember, I sent to BLUE BOOK, and I recall the very nice and very kind letter that came back with it. I have a novel, "A Woman of Forty," coming out this fall from the Dial Press; I can claim no special knowledge to justify the title, only an attempt to steer shrewdly down the middle (in a title sense only) between Balzac's "A Woman of Thirty" and Maugham's "A Woman of Fifty."

The pass through the hills described in the story "Moa" is one I remember hearing my father tell me about; his father and mother made their way along it on foot toward their first homestead in the new country after the long voyage—six months, around the Horn—from England.



Photo by Lotte Jacobi



John Blair Beach

HE was born at Mare Island Navy Yard; and having a father and brother* in the Navy, it would seem natural for Captain John Blair Beach to have been the third to follow, rather than choosing the Army as his career. He graduated from West Point in 1943, and is at present assigned to duty at the University of Southern California, living in Los Angeles with his wife and daughter.

He received the Purple Heart, Bronze Star, and Silver Star with oak-leaf cluster for his part in actions depicted in "Dagwood Red Charlie—One."

For a long time after being hit by the enemy, Captain Beach was thought to be dead, as his surviving comrades saw him go down before a burst of machine-gun fire at point-blank range. It was only after the territory was retaken, and his body not found, that he was officially listed as "missing" rather than "deceased." After his liberation, Captain Beach was hospitalized for a year before returning to duty.

"The very great attrition of my platoon was not unusual," says Captain Beach. "Indeed, any front-line outfit could expect a similar fate after five months of combat. Unique is the infantryman who saw more than that amount of combat without becoming a casualty."

"It should not be forgotten that the Infantry is the 'Queen of Battles.' The purpose of all other combat forces is simply to pave the way for the foot soldier. The purpose of the Infantry is to win wars."

*Lt. Comdr. Edwin L. Beach, whose story of his submarine, the *Trigger*, appeared in our October, 1946, issue, and whose articles about *Archerfish* and *Waboo* have been printed in recent months. His history of *Tang's* extraordinary career will follow shortly.

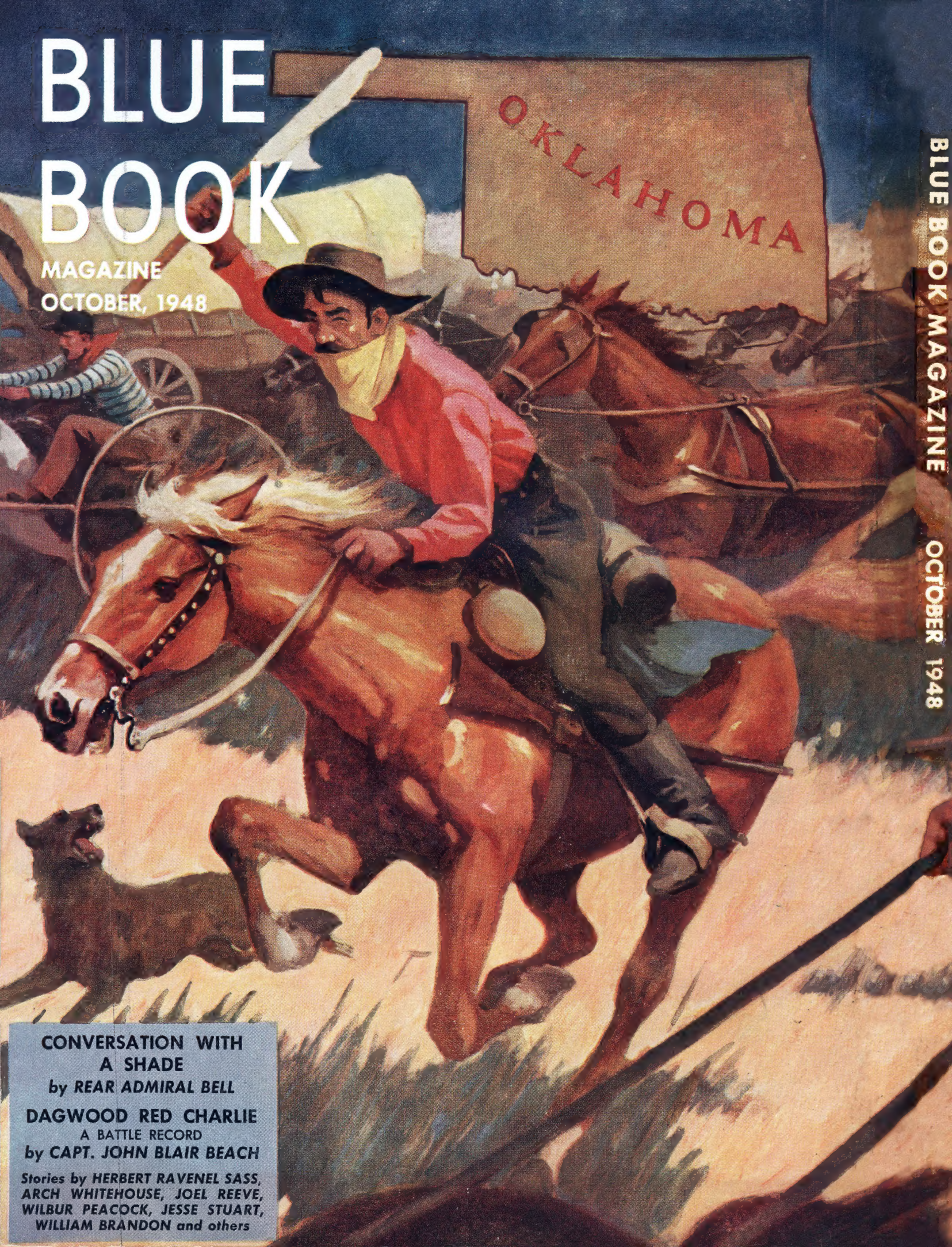
BLUE BOOK

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CONVERSATION WITH A SHADE

by REAR ADMIRAL BELL

DAGWOOD RED CHARLIE

A BATTLE RECORD

by CAPT. JOHN BLAIR BEACH

Stories by HERBERT RAVENEL SASS,
ARCH WHITEHOUSE, JOEL REEVE,
WILBUR PEACOCK, JESSE STUART,
WILLIAM BRANDON and others